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PAMELA JUNE ANDERSON

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MENTORS

Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., D.Min
Molefi Kete Asante, Ph.D
Cornel West, Ph.D

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Advisors:	Dr. Robert O. Bland The Reverend Dr. Yvonne Delk The Reverend Dr. Herman Haller Dr. Marjorie Harris Dr. Mary Olson
Pastor:	Dr. F. Allison Phillips
Mentors:	Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr. Dr. Molefi Kete Asanta Dr. Cornel West
Consultants:	The Reverend Wendell Anthony Dr. Monte Norwood The Reverend G. Wesley Raney The Reverend Leticia P. J. Rouser The Reverend Henry T. Simmons The Reverend Bernadette Glover-Williams Dr. Eloni Elon Wilks
Context Associates:	Mrs. Matilda Bland Mr. Charles Brantley Mrs. Geraldine Brantley Mrs. Bobette Jackson Mrs. Evelyn King Ms. Antasha Linder Ms. Wilma Vaughn Mr. Gordon Welch Mrs. Lillie Welch

*Change Agents:

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Mr. Sam Bebee
Mrs. Helen Duncan Butler
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Mrs. Kara Gaston
Mrs. Gail Gillespie
The Honorable Teola Hunter
Mr. Clarence Jackson
Mrs. Sarah B. McClendon
Mr. Walter McCoy
Ms. Deborah Moore
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*These are additional on-site persons who actively and regularly participate in Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth living, support, and, in some cases, defend the need to reflect spirituality and/or ethnicity in our church name.

**These are persons who, because of the legal voting age, are ineligible to vote for change, but participate in the Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth process.

Church Models:
Trinity United Church of Christ
Chicago, Illinois
Fellowship Chapel United Church of Christ
Detroit, Michigan
Imani United Church of Christ
Euclid, Ohio
Macedonia United Church of Christ
Raleigh, North Carolina
Advent United Church of Christ
Columbus, Ohio
Emmanuel United Church of Christ
Lexington, Kentucky

Church:
Founded as Mayflower Congregational Church in 1930. Envisioned in 1995 as L'Amistad United Church of Christ.

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ABSTRACT

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION AND REBIRTH OF

MY CHURCH MY SELF FROM

THE CHRIST/AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

by

Pamela June Anderson

United Theological Seminary, 1996

Mentors: Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., D.Min.
Molefi Kete Asante, Ph.D.
Cornel West, Ph.D.

This project was designed to prepare Mayflower Congregational Church in Detroit, Michigan to accept a relevant identification. The model consisted of sermon series, small group discussions, Bible Studies, and viewings of the video I Remember The Amistad, as well as naming ministries, choirs, and projects with African or Biblical names. The teaching and learning experiences were framed by Christ/African centered perspectives, denominational church history, and personal heritage. The results of the model were evaluated by chronicling and comparing survey responses, interviews, and questionnaires that tracked congregational readiness for a new identification, namely, The L'Amistad United Church of Christ.

Dedicated

First to God -- the One Eternal Presence, Spirit, Wisdom, and Power; and then to Africans in the diaspora who seek the kingdom and the power and the glory of God within.

My prayer to God is for Africans in the diaspora to be self-determined in rediscovering and identifying with 'who' and 'Whose' we are; self-defined by our rich heritage and Creator of the seat of civilization; and self-propelled to consciously enter Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth as promised through Him described as one with hair white like wool, eyes as a flame of fire; feet like fine brass, and a voice that sounds like many waters (Revelations 1:13-15).

INTRODUCTION

At this point in the spiritual transformation and rebirth process 'telling the story' begins. The task is to present in writing the central component of the Doctor of Ministry work. The entire process is the central component and, when replicated with the readers' personal modifications, will produce kindred experiences among those desiring spiritual transformation and rebirth.

The title of this central component is MY CHURCH MY SELF. It is intended to be a legendary, proverbial, and historical account of a process that began millennias ago. Narratives incorporated in the following pages describe personal experiences and participants' responses, lists measurable and observable accomplishments, and provide information that can be used for future directions for ministry, speculation about settings where the model might be used, and unlimited possibilities for spiritual transformation and rebirth among diverse religious traditions.

The model for spiritual transformation and rebirth evolved in response to concurrent and projected changes in demographics within a particular Context in Ministry; namely the Mayflower Congregation Church in Detroit, Michigan, envisioned in 1930 by a European American, the Reverend George E. Gullen, Sr., for a European American community of faith.

In the early 60's, the demographics within the

surrounding community changed from predominantly European to African American. As the community transformed, the church also changed. The church is now 99% African American with bloodlines influenced by Indian, Irish, and German lineage.

Though I wondered why African Americans would want to bear a European identification, it was not until February of 1994, that I took this wondering seriously. Throughout the subsequent months identification with Christ/African centeredness became an evident avenue for identifying with and internalizing 'Whose' and 'who' we are.

By August of 1995, I had the opportunity and blessing of listening to a cassette tape entitled "You Are Your Own Experience." The speaker was the Reverend Linda "Shaheerah" Beatty, author of The Wealth of a Spiritual Woman." Following a period of reflection on this presentation, personal experience and extensive observations with and among religious communities world-wide led me to conclude that most African Americans serve others' Gods and abide by others' interpretations of God's word. Without periodic, healthy, speculative self-examinations for and about ourselves, we continually perpetuate a mimicked internalization of 12th Century theologians and missionaries.

The 12th Century theology embraced and institutionalized fundamental doctrines that endorsed slaves obeying their masters, wives submitting to their husbands,

women keeping silent in the church, condemnation of homosexuals, environmental and economic injustice, assorted phobias, justification of slavery, and the denigration of Africa, African slaves, African Americans, and Native Americans.

The plan worked. Four years before the turn of another century, and the beginning of another millennium, people of color in general and African Americans in particular are trapped in a European ethos that has convinced many to usurp themselves, at worse; and give deference, at best, to racist America. Even in the church, worship is considered the most segregated though sacred hour of the week.

The founders of Mayflower Congregational Church so named it out of their history, their heritage, and their mission. The current constituency has the opportunity to name itself out of the African American experience, history, heritage, and mission; Or, at least, out of Holy Writ. The one place in the world where African Americans will their own power, their own destiny, their own self-determination, and their own self-definition is the church.

To think about MY CHURCH MY SELF as a book about a building, a facility, a worship center, a denomination, or even an individual member of a community of faith is to miss the point. MY CHURCH MY SELF is about Africans in the diaspora and African Americans rediscovering, redefining, and reshaping their church and themselves in the context of

'who' and 'Whose' they are. It is about spiritual transformation and rebirth among a people programmed by 'systems' created, designed, and developed to devalue, degrade, denounce, and deny people of color their own destiny, identity, and identification.

MY CHURCH MY SELF can be applied by individuals in search of a way out of a maddening, deadly internalized belief that what someone else calls them is not only more important than what they call themselves, but also what others have called them has become such a sacred identification that there is minimal interest in identifying with their own power within.

The spiritual transformation and rebirth journey is tedious because it requires unlearning decades of systemic theological misinterpretation, imagery, and miseducation; and joyful because it requires being in daily, one-on-one relationships with individual's history, ancestral heritage, and personal experience. To love one's self is not to hate others. In truth, you cannot love God, Whom you have not seen, or others, whom you see everyday, until you love yourself.

MY CHURCH MY SELF is about seeking first the Kingdom within and after identifying with It, experiencing the transforming power of being born again and again and again in the image and likeness of an inclusive God; and it is about the process of change. Throughout the obvious African

presence in Scripture, God has changed the names of people and places concurrent with changed missions, mind sets, and ministries. Why not the church? African Americans are not the people nor the descendants of The Mayflower. Our mission, our mind set, and our ministry is different - and so should be our name.

MY CHURCH MY SELF is written to accommodate two different audiences - academia and the general public. Fulfilling the academic expectation, collecting and presenting data as required in the life of the doctoral student, was far less complicated than its interpretation, interpolation, and application for public use. For the general public, the application of the data for bringing vision to fruition requires a totally different approach. In a phrase, the general public is informed and empowered to read another's story about extraordinary opportunities for spiritual transformation and rebirth.

Spiritual transformation and rebirth is not easy, but once you know what it is, it is simple. It is a matter of acknowledging that your body moves and has its being by your spirit; and, your spirit is the Breath of God. (Genesis 2:7)

By the time you reach a certain chronological age, your family, your educational pursuit, your religious persuasion, and your environment has made you, molded you, and shaped you after their image and in their likeness. Spiritual

transformation and rebirth is about you and your God making you, molding you, and shaping you after the image and likeness you have been birthed to BE.

MY CHURCH MY SELF is so named for a number of reasons. One of the reasons is evident in the similarities between the written segments entitled **The Heritage - The Spiritually Transforming Person** and **The History - The Spiritually Transforming Place.**

Both the Church of God Movement I grew up in and the denomination I am ordained by, the United Church of Christ (UCC), are European centered. According to the oral folklore, the Southern African American churches were excluded at the time the Congregational tradition merged with the Christian, German Reformed, and German Evangelicals to form the United Church of Christ in 1957. Juxtaposed against the majority of our Baptist, African Methodist, Muslim, Native American, and African American UCC brothers and sisters who view religion, collect information, interpret data, apply knowledge, and establish themselves from the African, Christ-Centered perspective, my church and my self inherited a European centered faith.

The most important reason for the name MY CHURCH MY SELF has to do with being the Body of Christ and reflecting an inherent image and likeness of God. God is love, spirit, truth, and inclusive. Our name, our words, our behavior, our thoughts, and our lifestyles must BE molded after 'who'

God has created us to BE - loving, truthful, included, and inclusive spiritual beings.

When I was invited into the United Church of Christ, inclusion of women in ministry was intentional. The United Church of Christ is also an Open and Affirming church (inclusive of the struggles of gay and lesbians); a church sensitive to economic and environmental issues; a church deeply committed to social justice; and a church in covenant with multi-ethnic pronouncements.

The particular congregation I am Divinely appointed to, is the first church associated with United Church of Christ in the State of Michigan to call an African American female as Pastor. This wonderful, faithful, hopeful, and progressive congregation, however, is far more desirous of freedom in Christ then they have been taught or allowed to be under the Europeans who abandoned them in the 60's.

Dr. Molefi Kete Asante writes in KEMET, AFROCENTRICITY AND KNOWLEDGE "to begin this pilgrimage towards disentanglement will mean that we must find intellectual paths which have long been covered by the superimposition of monoethnic ideas as universal (p. 30)." Dr. Asante implores persons to genuinely examine and adopt other perspectives as relevant knowledge. Not exclusive of European studies, but equally weighed and therefore complementary as opposed to domineering.

A reading of Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr.'s book

AFRICANS WHO SHAPED OUR FAITH, should certainly prompt searchers of spiritual truths to hold a healthy suspicion about the monoethnic ideas regarding religion. Modern and post modern movie stars have been selected to depict Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Queen of Sheba, Queen of the Nile, and Jesus as Europeans; and the creation of The Middle East as an eighth Continent has been designated European. These two actions alone should cause people of color to distrust the abundant value placed on the light of European centeredness and the abounding value imposed on the heathenism, barbarism, and paganism of all other Nations.

Is your church a reflection of 'who' and 'Whose' you are? If you have not asked yourself this question or if you have and your answer is 'no,' the time has come in your life for spiritual transformation and rebirth.

THE CONTEXT OF THE PERSON, PLACE, AND PURPOSE

The Heritage - The Spiritually Transforming Person

In preparation for writing **The Heritage - The Spiritually Transforming Person**, a spiritual autobiographical essay, two sources of instruction were resourceful: 1) Dr. Samuel Proctor's lecture on writing a spiritual autobiographical essay and 2) his book SAMUEL PROCTOR: MY MORAL ODYSSEY. During Dr. Proctor's lecture he extended an appeal to the listening community to "tell the truth." In his book he strategically refers to entering into the life of the mind.

Indeed, indepth reflection is necessary to address the truth as suggested in Dr. Proctor's stated expectations: (1) Tell the truth about your inherited faith; (2) How did you become a disciple of Christ?; (3) What faith challenges became turning points in shaping your personal knowledge about your relationship with God?; (4) What was the net result? That is to say, what remains in place following the challenges to your faith?; (5) Who "called" you to the ministry and what does it mean to be "called"?; and, (6) Where is your ministry leading you?

Because the word ministry means different things to different people and is also a broadly used term encompassing mission oriented persons, places, and things; and because the above questions are applicable to lay persons and ordained representatives of God alike, an honest

reflection and written responses to these inquiries are useable entrees into the process of Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth.

I am the youngest of Esther and the late Ernest Anderson's seven children. Born and reared in Columbus, Ohio, I grew up in a family-centered and faith-filled church environment. Long before I developed cognitive knowledge about God or faith, my mom taught me to pray and I accompanied her to church. My dad abstained from the weekly rituals of the institutionalized church. However, Dad was a man of great faith in his own way. He provided and cared for his family, he kept a job(s) throughout and beyond the years of the great depression, and he regularly played religious cassette tapes and albums. In the home I frequently enjoyed listening to Dad's music and the family talk about the circumstances surrounding my birth.

My conception was unplanned but welcomed. Medical complications, however, required a caesarean section delivery six weeks prematurely. The placenta was partially pulled away from its place and obstructing the birth canal, the umbilical cord was wrapped around my neck, and my mom was bleeding internally. When given the choice of sacrificing her life or mine, Mom called the community of faith to pray. The obvious blessing is in the reality that we both lived and, at the time of this writing, Mom is four months from her 90th birthday.

My siblings were full term and naturally birthed. The procedure and circumstances under which I was born, however, was a crucial "first" that my brothers and sisters would recall and talk about. In retrospect, a case could be made that this 'first' was an indication that I would be an African American female of many "firsts."

By the time I came along in 1947, my three brothers were in the Army and my next sibling is a sister eleven years older. They, too, were reared and well indoctrinated in the church that shaped the Anderson family's faith.

We inherited a faith in a jealous, judgmental, and wrathful God who spewed people out of HIS mouth and demanded loyalty, perfection, and obedience to His inerrant Word; a God however, who answered prayers.

Our inherited faith was deeply entrenched in the Pauline do's and don't's. It was a faith that bore its witness in "holy" dress, strict observation of "the Law," and, at times, illogical adherence to a white, blue eyed, long haired Jesus.

The expectations of the local church regarding evangelism and redemption were quite clear. At the age of accountability [12] individuals were eligible to join the church. Joining the church required coming to the altar of confession, asking Jesus for forgiveness, and testifying to the congregation that one would live "free from sin." New converts were baptized by emersion, took communion, and

washed one another's feet. The latter two activities were called Ordinances as opposed to Sacraments. The Ordinance of Baptism was considered an outward sign of an inward work, symbolic of burying the old "man" and rising a new "man." The Ordinance of Foot Washing was a sign of humility.

I adhered -- faithfully attended worship, believed I was living free from sin, and followed the dress codes and legalistic tenants of the church: restricted dating to "like" believers, no movies, no smoking, no wearing pants, no dancing, and no worldliness.

Even though demonstrating my faith according to the church doctrine greatly inhibited my life, my thinking, and my plans for a future (Jesus was coming any day so there was no need for attending college, getting married, or having children), I believed I inherited **the only truth.** Interestingly enough, God called me to the ministry during this time. Whereas I did not recognize the call as such, I read Scripture and dedicated extended periods of time to silently meditate on God's word. This discipline led me to come home from church and attempt to model the preacher's preaching style. Women who graced the pulpit really made an impression on my life -- the Reverend Ozie Wattleton of Washington Court House, Ohio, and the late Reverends Naomi Patterson of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Ethel Jackson, Gladys Walker, and Margaret Edwards of Columbus, Ohio.

In addition to church impressions, Mom was influenced

by another family in the neighborhood, and I was allowed to become a Brownie and a Girl Scout at Shiloh Baptist Church. I also have three sisters, one of whom took me on trips beyond the Columbus City limits to visit the other sister. And the third sister, after marrying and starting her own family, took her sons and me to the Ohio State Annual Fair and the Walt Disney Movies Song of the South, Snow White, and Cinderella.

I especially remember Song of the South. It was the only movie with 'colored' people in it - though negatively portrayed. In retrospect, I believe this movie unconsciously invited me to speculate about my inherited faith. When I asked questions, however, precious few church people understood my inquiries and others instructed, "don't question Him, obey Him." Outwardly, I complied to these demands. Many years would come and go before these demands and other faith challenges became turning points in shaping my personal knowledge and relationship with God. In each case, the situation called for me to stand against family understandings about the church's faith doctrine. Sometimes I stood silently and at other times I stood alone. But taking a stand for 'who' and 'whose' you are is crucial in the process of Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth.

In 1964, I was a senior at the Columbus East High School. I had earned recognition from the school debating team, Junior Achievement, and Distributive Education Clubs

of America (DECA). In fact, as a DECA Program participant I attended classes half of the school day and worked the other half at the Parsons Avenue Kroger Company. I was the first African American female cashier to work at this Kroger Grocery Store. Concurrent with working, I tithed at the church, graduated from high school (1965), worshiped on Sunday (it was against the doctrine of the church to work on the Lord's day!), and earned the Kroger Golden Rule Award -- an award granted employees who were conscientious, efficient, dependable, and courteous towards customers.

In church I was taught to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." In school I was taught "in order to succeed, do twice as much and work twice as hard" because I was female and Negro. I would neither accept nor internalize the European American perspective that Negroes, however well accomplished, were viewed and called 'niggers'.

I had a glimpse of internalized oppression in my home and in my church. Dad was pro-white, a retired Kroger employee, and a son of a slave reared on and named after the Vonner Plantation owners. If a white person said it, it was so. If a white person couldn't do it, it couldn't be done. When Dad spoke this way or acted this out, the implications of being Negro and pro-white became increasingly confusing. Unable to accept or believe in a philosophy that placed one person above another because of skin color, I challenged an imposing expectation in the work place.

A Kroger employee ordered me to help him stock the shelves. I probably would have complied if he hadn't called me the "N" word. At first, I thought I misunderstood him. When I asked for clarification he put me on report. It was inappropriate to 'talk back' to an adult of any color -- let alone a white man. Even so, when he told me to "shut up and get to work" I did neither. When he reported me to management, I stated my concerns and the employee was corrected. Something in my inner being, however, questioned the authenticity of a white man correcting another white man on behalf of a Negro. This incident took place in the Summer of 1965!

Without a word to my parents, my pastor, or my peers, I took the very next scheduled weekday off and applied for work at the Columbus Defense Construction Supply Center (DCSC). Even though I passed the Government test at 110 words per minute with three errors on a manual typewriter and warranted a greater offer from the Government than GS-1, temporary clerk typist, I submitted my termination notice to the Parsons Avenue Kroger Company the second week in September, 1966, and commenced with the Defense Construction Supply Center in October, 1966.

One year later, my colleagues were bragging about their impending upgrade from GS-2 to GS-4 and GS-3 to GS-5, respectively. This was quite a revelation. I thought we were all GS-1 temps. Since I had been recognized for

superior work, it followed, in my mind, that I would be promoted also. As it turned out the word from the front office was "there were not enough funds to promote every one and the 'others' had seniority." Naively, I contacted the Defense Department in Washington, D. C. and asked for the additional funds necessary to promote me at the Defense Construction Supply Center in Columbus. The Defense Department replied with an offer to come to Washington, D. C. as a GS 3 Clerk Typist with permanent status."

Leave Columbus? Leave my family? Leave local church family? "No!" was my dad's answer. My mom's approach was surprisingly different. Memory has long forsaken our conversation, but I can recount her calling a "saint" in Washington, D. C. and arranging a place for me to stay until I could get my footing.

The following day, I submitted a letter requesting a transfer from the Defense Construction Supply Center to the Department of the Army in Washington, D. C., and immediately received a counter offer to stay. Instead of challenging the establishment's sudden availability of funds I rejected the offer. Much to my surprise, the Defense Construction Supply Center increased their offer. While thanking the supervisor for attempting to adjust his former position, my response to him was one of accepting the position at the Department of the Army in Washington, D. C., 27 October 1967.

During the last hours as a resident of Columbus, my heart filled with joy for, and anticipation of, the new experience; and sorrow for leaving the old. I was fearful of the unknown and faith-filled by the Known. I wanted to be independent and dreaded the geographic distance. This notwithstanding, Dad and I drove away from my mom who stayed home because it had been broken into the day before while we were out preparing for the trip. Eight hours later we arrived safely at the home of the now deceased Theodore and Pansy Brown and settled on the cost for room and board. Before Dad left the city the next day, we met with people from church, toured the city, and located my new place of employment. Dad left me with the family car and motored by bus back to my family in Columbus, 400 miles away. I was 20 years old and on my own.

Thank God for Claudia and Vivian, two sisters in the church who kept me from going completely astray from the doctrine. This particular community of faith seemed politicized and the doctrine compromised as I understood it. Here, members wore jewelry, went to social gatherings, tasted refreshments stronger than punch, and dated people from other denominations.

Within the year, Vivian married and I took her apartment. The next year, 1969, Claudia moved to Nevada. In 1970, I wandered from the church, uprooted to Maryland, ended up on welfare for a while, and I was arrested twice

for things I had not done. The first time, the arresting officer informed the courts that I was innocent. My only crime was associating with "the wrong people." These were active members of the church of my youth. How could a church member be a "wrong people?"

Later on, the person who had been rightfully arrested, stole my check book and wrote checks against a depleted account. I was also arrested, again. When the system put me on probation I began to see this relationship for what it was and the negative effect it was having on my life. My reputation was decreasing in integrity, my character was marred, my life was a mess, and my self-esteem was rapidly diminishing.

Between 1970 and 1979, I ceased to believe God loved me, I rejected the tenet of the church, and I engaged in as many questionable activities as I could tolerate. These nine years, however, provided me with a wealth of knowledge and experience born out of my ignorance and benign neglect of my faith, and pulled me further away from the institutionalized church. Ironically, they also drove me closer to completing my education. I graduated from Catonsville Community College in 1976, with an Associate of Arts degree and Johns Hopkins University in 1978, with a Bachelor's of Science degree. Concurrently, I was accepted into the Federal Government's Upward Mobility Program and promoted annually.

In 1976, I was appointed to a professional position in the Maryland Department of Transportation as a Highway Safety Management Specialist, GS 7. I was the first African American female to serve in this position in the Federal Government. One year later I was promoted to a GS 9 and offered the choice of moving to Scranton, Pennsylvania or the District of Columbia. I opted for the familiar, Washington, D.C. Within months I was promoted to a GS-11, Highway Safety Management Specialist serving the Office of Program and Policy Development. This position accessed Capitol Hill in a relationship with the Department of Transportation; I knew the Secretary of Transportation and members of Congress; and a promotion to GS-12 was pending. Nostalgia, however, crept into and welled within my being.

I had bought a little house and decided to have a little party. As cold as it was, people came to the party in what seemed like droves. Dionne Warwick's new album "Dionne" was out and appropriate music for slow dragging was playing. Opting to be hostess instead of dancer, I was able to listen to the artist sing:

> "All the time I thought, there's only me
> Crazy in a way that no one else could be.
> I would have given everything I owned,
> If someone would have said 'you're not alone.'
> All the time I thought that I was wrong
> Wanting to be me, but needing to belong.
> I had just believed in all I had,
> If someone would have said 'you're not so bad.'
> All the time, all the wasted time
> All the years waiting for a sign;
> To think I had it all. All the time."

The lyrics immobilized me. A guest attending the party walked up to me and said the strangest thing. "You know we really love you, but you will never truly belong to the world. There's something about you. No matter how hard you try to fit, you're just not one of us." Was this the first time I had heard these words? No! But it was the first time I had a glimpse of their meaning. Later in the month at another party, I was listening to Lou Rawls singing "One Life To Live" when I slipped into another moment of immobility. A Church of God in Christ woman who had also gone astray walked up to me and said "It's time for both of us." Although she did not elaborate, I understood her phrase to mean that it was time for both of us to consciously and intentionally return to God's agenda.

Within the week, I left the office to attend to an assignment on Capitol Hill. When I came to myself this time, however, I was parked in front of the church I had left years ago. "Something" opened my door and escorted me into the sanctuary. Within minutes the pastor's wife, Sister Delineta L. Hines, had quietly eased into the pew behind me. She had an uncanny radar system when it came to the youth and young adults of the church. Instantly recognizing her presence, I spoke only five words "I want to come home." On the fourth Sunday in February, 1979, I became a disciple of Christ, re-affiliated with the church of my heritage, and returned to daily devotions and

meditation. I asked God to forgive me, accept me, and live in me; and I also asked for God's help in meeting multi-pronged faith challenges. Within the year, circumstances had been so repositioned by God that by the last Saturday morning in February, 1980, almost one year from the conscious beginning of the journey, God called me into the ministry for the second time.

I was reading the mystical writings of the Gospel of John, Chapter 21. At the first tri-fold inquisition between Jesus and Peter, the room filled with a Presence I had not sensed since childhood. In lieu of the name "Peter," I heard the voice of God clearly inquire "Pamela, do you love Me?" Answering in the affirmative, God responded with the call to "feed my people."

Accepting this faith challenge required a personal resolution that would balance acquiring the pending GS-12 promotion with answering the call to full time ministry. Preoccupation with a mental battle between my understanding of success and God's call to full time ministry interrupted a long developed ability to do government work.

Unlike employers mentioned earlier, my supervisor worked <u>with</u> and assisted me in maintaining some level of competence. Six months into what I thought was "burn out" I came up with the bright idea of transferring to another department within Transportation. My supervisor, with regret, arranged for me to transfer with full benefits,

including the impending promotion. For this reprieve, I compromised with God and went to Seminary part time. The compromise, however, was not enough. By the time I digressed to the point where drawing a straight line with a ruler was complicated, the Government circulated the annual reduction in force (RIF) plan. I remember thinking "Volunteer for RIF and take a break from the Government. At least you can come back within twelve months at the same level." Hoping this concession would please God, I volunteered for RIF effective 1 January 1981, entered seminary full time, and withdrew retirement to pay rent, tuition, board, and books for one year.

Lo and behold, the funds were greatly diminished by June of 1981. How would the next semester be taken care of? In search for an answer, God and I drove across the Americas. Among other things, God and I talked about God's calling me to ministry and my financial circumstances. God heard and answered. Upon my return to Seminary in August of 1981, Dean Marshall Grigsby offered me a two year Deanship that paid full tuition and provided a stipend. In 1983, Dr. Evans E. Crawford, Dean of the Chapel, chose me to serve as his assistant in the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel. The benefits of both Deanships carried me through graduation as well as allowed me to share the pulpit with the best preachers in the country including the Reverend Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr.

Yet another faith challenge emerged in 1984. It was truly **the** faith challenge that became **the** turning point in shaping my personal knowledge about my relationship with God. In addition to my duties at the Chapel and the Seminary, I was "In Care," assisting the minister of music in a sister church of my youth, cleaning up my life, and returning to the legalistic theology of my inherited faith. The Denomination was so big on confession, forgiveness, and perfection that I was not the least bit concerned about my application for ordination. When I met with the Ministerial Team to review my application, however, who do you suppose was there to bring up my past? An ordained minister who was also a relative of the 'wrong people' previously mentioned.

Following this unproductive meeting with the Ministerial Team, I made an appointment to talk with the Seminary Dean. As I shared my story with the Seminary Dean, he stopped me in mid-sentence and asked me to repeat the name of the person impeding justice. I repeated his name and was dismissed from the Dean's office with this statement "That young man came through this Seminary and made a mess of things here also. You need to come into the United Church of Christ where you can have freedom in serving a just and forgiving God." Hearing the Dean's words reminded me of the cliche 'there's always a ram in the bush' which can also be interpreted to mean 'be grateful for the times God simultaneously closes a door and opens a window.'

Henceforth, membership in the Church of God or any other religious affiliation is distinguished from being in relationship with God. The Dean's invitation helped me to realized that the hand of a loving God was guiding my life, not a wrathful God. I sensed a forgiving God, not a God of judgment. And I had found a Great God not a begrudging God. This same God is the God who called me.

It was also during this phase of spiritual transformation and rebirth that I recognized the source of the internalized oppression I developed in the church of my inherited faith. During my childhood I could only sense an inconsistency among: who we were - Negroes in that day; who God had created us to be - an image and reflection of God; and the images of God we were exposed to - European. By the time I reached adolescence I had learned to repress the reality that there was something 'wrong,' something out of place among us -- an African American people of faith. Sitting in an Old Testament class, it occurred to me what one "something" was -- the European image of Jesus painted on the entire front, center wall in the church sanctuary of my inherited faith. The Dean's affirmation of my call resulted in the realization that my inherited faith promoted patriarchal leadership, European values, and ignored and/or excluded my personhood and ethnic affiliation.

Along with the ministry of reconciliation I believe God calls men and women to be 'who' and 'whose' they have been

created to be. The conscious awakening to the value of being 'who' and 'whose' God has called an individual to be is the beginning of Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth.

Inspite of, and perhaps because of, these insightful 'faith challenges', I have come to believe that spiritual transformation and rebirth is dependent upon a personal and shared faith with a personal and faithful Savior. It is an increasingly internalized faith nurtured by the Spirit of God. It is a faith continually shaping lives through Divine Appointments in Divine Order.

The net results of these faith challenges continually manifest themselves in tangible and intangible ways. The tangibles are connected to that crucial "first" recorded earlier and referred to as an indicator that I would be an African American female of many "firsts:..." The first African American Woman to be (1) ordained at the historic Lincoln Temple UCC in Washington, D.C. (1985), (2) installed as associate pastor at Plymouth United Church of Christ, Detroit, Michigan (1986), (3) installed as Associate Association Minister, also know as Associate Conference Minister (1989), (4) deployed to Desert Shield/Storm (1990), and (5) installed as Senior Pastor in the United Church of Christ in the State of Michigan (1994).

Only God can provide the ministerial road map I have traveled in less than ten years of post graduate work. Praise be to the Creator, the Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

At my Service of Installation in November of 1985, as the first African American female to serve at Plymouth United Church of Christ in Detroit, Dr. Lawrence N. Jones, now retired Dean of Howard University Divinity School, was the installation preacher. His major point was "study to show yourself approved unto God." More than reading books, he implored me to develop the art of observation, to pay attention to the signs of life, and to learn the patterns of people. The late Mary Haley Bell had been advising me all along "everybody has a pattern. Get to know the pattern and you'll recognize it anywhere." Dr. Jones affirmed the advice.

Spiritual transformation and rebirth are greatly enhanced by observation and inquiry. Admittedly, it is a struggle to construct questions appropriately and defenselessly. This notwithstanding, God's greatest revelations come through observing and participating in relationships among people who inquire with the intent of the Scripture which says, in essence, ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you.

On January 1, 1994, I began my first local church senior pastorate. The Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ, affectionately called the Church on the Hill, issued the call September 30, 1993.

The installation preacher on this awesome occasion was

the Reverend Dr. Yvonne Delk, Executive Director of the Community Renewal Society in Chicago, Illinois. Her major theme was 'go on to the promise land and nurture along the way those wanting to be 'who' and 'whose' God has created them to be.' Claudia was deceased by then, but Vivian, numerous members of my family, my spiritual friend Sister Jeanine, my pastor Dr. F. Allison Phillips, and 500 hundred others were present and supportive.

The Church on the Hill had experienced eleven years of either bi-vocational or interim leadership between August 1977 and December 31, 1993, and many of God's people had either drifted away or stayed and managed as best they could to keep the church going. Those who stayed had done a very good and commendable work. Alas, God brought together a people, a pastor, and a purpose compatible with God's call on my life to share God's unconditional love and to facilitate re-establishing relationships with God.

I believe my ministry will lead this church to fulfill a new motto "THE CHURCH ON THE HILL WHERE PRAYER IS CHANGING PEOPLE AND PEOPLE ARE CHANGING THINGS;" this is a multi-point vision and a Christ/African Centered spiritual transformation and rebirth image.

The History - The Spiritually Transforming Place

In the pages which follow, the reader will find information and data including a history of United Church of Christ denominational formation; a brief reference to the

demographics of the African American churches; a history of the local congregation; general demographics, specific demographics, and the revisioning process the subject church completed in 1993; a graph of membership, information from annual reports, and a demographic analysis of the congregation.

Unlike any denomination in Protestant history, the United Church of Christ (UCC) is a uniting and united composite of four traditions: the German Reformed Church of the United States, the Evangelical Synod in North America, the Congregational, and the Christian Church.

The history of the German Reformed Church of the United States has its roots in England where John Wyclif translated the Bible into English in 1382. Subsequent to Wyclif's translations, Reformationists spread to France and Switzerland. The reformationists' influence resulted in the Reformation which gave birth to Protestantism in the 1500's. Proponents of the Reformation in Europe included Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) from Zurich, John Calvin (1509-1564) from Geneva, and Martin Luther (1483-1546) from Eisleben.

In the 17th and 18th Centuries, German and German-Swiss settlers were redemptioners who bartered their future and their abilities for a specified period in order to compensate their passage to Pennsylvania and the Middle Atlantic region. This tradition was primarily sanctioned by the Bible and the Heidelberg Catechism. The Heidelberg

Catechism is a resource for instruction, preaching, and theological teaching adopted in 1563.[1]

It should be noted that the German Reformed came to this country primarily as Protestant Christians who had been nurtured in the Reformed faith. In 1710, German immigrants established congregations in the United States. By 1793, there were 178 German-speaking congregations and 15,000 members.

In 1863, the Synod of the German Reformed Church in the United States of America was established and founded Lancaster Theological Seminary in 1871. Concurrently, "Frederick William III of Prussia united the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of his kingdom, giving birth to the ancestral church of the Evangelical Synod of North America."[2]

Unlike the redemptionists, the Evangelicals were unionists from Germany. In the ecumenical age of the 20th Century unionists would be a reference used by churches that were restoring their oneness in Christ and unifying within Christianity.

Ironically, many unionists in the evangelical faith remained separatist out of their sense of precaution from

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[1]Division of Education and Publication, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, History and Program. A History of the United Church of Christ (New York: United Church Press, 1986), p. 18.

[2]ibid., p. 8.

forced compromises and coerced unions.

> "Between 1830 and 1845, 40,000 German Evangelicals settled in the midwestern states of Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Iowa, and Wisconsin. Those who populated Missouri became the Missouri Synod Lutheran denomination. The German Evangelicals were Pietist - zealous for the gospel, individual expressions of faith within the tradition of the Reformation, and "free-thinking rationalist, who placed their hope in science, education, and culture."[3]

The basic principles of the Evangelical Synod in the North Americas were Christ alone, faith alone, and the Bible alone.

In the 1800's, German immigrants established churches in the midwest. In 1872, the Synod of the West, the Synod of the East, and the Synod of the Northwest merged to establish The German Evangelical Synod of North America. By 1927, the name "German" was dropped from the Synod title; thus, the Evangelical Synod of North America.

A notable distinction between the German Reformed and the German Evangelical Church was that the German Reformed Church was involved in building colleges and seminaries whereas the German Evangelical Church established new churches and

> "organized ways of meeting the special needs of the sick, the handicapped, the orphaned, and the disadvantaged. The number of hospitals, institutions, and other enterprises established by the churches of this Evangelical tradition proportionately exceeds that

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[3]Ibid., p. 36.

of most Protestant bodies."[4]

The merger of the German Reformed and the German Evangelical Church, June 26, 1934, blended the doctrines of autonomy and authority. This merger changed the name of the church to the Evangelical and Reformed Church. The Calvinist doctrine was retained, and this doctrine brought to the United Church of Christ the emphasis on liberty of conscience, authority of Scripture, and "order and discipline as it relates to the reign of God in the world."[5]

The Christian Church is the tradition of the United Church of Christ (UCC) whose roots are almost purely American in origin. The Christian Church emerged out of three religious group leaders.

In 1794, James O'Kelly, a Methodist from Virginia, rallied other Methodist who also opposed episcopal governance. This group named themselves the "Christian Church," symbolizing their non-creedal, New Testament, faith stance. Their only requirement for church membership was Christian character.

Research of the history of the United Church of Christ

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[4]Gunnemann, Louis H., "The Shaping of the United Church of Christ," chap. in THE NATIONAL PHASE: EVANGELICALS (New York: United Church Press, 1977), p. 189.

[5]Division of Education and Publication, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, History and Program. A History of the United Church of Christ (New York: United Church Press, 1986), p. 48.

supports the thesis that James O'Kelly denounced slavery in 1789. This denunciation is reported as being several years before the abolition movement and resulted in many Blacks joining the Christian churches in the South.

In The Shaping of the United Church of Christ, author Louis H. Gunnemann reports that a Black was ordained in the Christian Church as early as 1848. Another source, "History and Program," a pamphlet produced by the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, identifies this Black person as Isaac Scott from North Carolina. He was sent to Liberia as the first overseas missionary from the Christian Church. Although there is limited reference to the North Carolina Colored Christian Conference, this group, established in 1866, grew to 6,000 strong by 1892.

At the turn of the Century, Abner Jones, a Baptist from Vermont, organized the First Free Christian Church. He opposed the Calvinist doctrine, baptism, and a restricted communion table. He believed that the only requirement for church membership was Christian character. Within the first decade of the 19th Century, Barton W. Stone withdrew with others from the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky, organized and called themselves "Christian."

As other like minded groups organized, they soon became known as the "Christian Connection" and espoused six principles: (1) Christ, the only head of the Church; (2) the Bible, the only authority for faith; (3) Christian

character, the only requirement for membership; (4) liberty of conscience and private judgment; (5) "Christian" as worthy for Christ's followers; and, (6) unity with all followers of Christ.

When King Henry VII broke with the Church of Rome in 1534 and established the Church of England, England moved beyond permanent Catholic control. In less than ten years, Mary Tudor, Catholic and Queen of England, executed Thomas Cranmer (author of "Book of Common Prayer"). This flagrant act resulted in over 800 dissenters fleeing under John Calvin, et.al. When the dissenters returned from Europe, they sought to purify the church. So named Puritans in 1563, these dissenters "criticized Anglican liturgy, ceremonies, and lack of discipline among the clergy. Their thrust toward independent thought and church autonomy laid the foundations for Congregationalism."[6]

> "The Puritans held to Reformed belief in the sovereignty of God, the authority of scripture as the revelation of God's will, and the necessity to bend to the will of God. The Puritans regarded human rituals and institutions as idolatrous impositions upon the word of God".[7]

Not even the new translation of the Bible into the King James Version satisfied the Puritans. They separated from the Church of England and, unable to agree among themselves about their differences with the church, became Separatist,

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[6]Ibid., p. 10.

[7]Ibid., p. 10.

later to be called Quakers, Baptists, and Congregationalists.

When the Separatist church was discovered in 1607, many of its followers fled to Holland. It was this group that became Pilgrims and arrived in America on the Mayflower in 1620. Robert Browne, an Anglican priest, advocated Congregationalism; John Smyth founded the Baptist church; and William Brewster became the leader of the Plymouth Colony in America. By 1931, the Christian Church and the Congregational Church united and became Congregational Christian Churches.

The historical significance of the four traditions of the United Church of Christ are important because even today there is concern as to whether Congregationalists are united and uniting enough to put to rest -- and simultaneously acknowledge -- our tradition without making the traditions our points of differences.

Some members resist identifying themselves as members of the United Church of Christ without emphasizing a tradition, e.g. Congregational. While history says that the Congregational church is heavily influenced by John Calvin -- the Puritans, the Separatists, and the Pilgrims -- history does not emphasize that Congregationalists are also descendants of a people who displaced Native Americans and were invaders of ancestral territories.

While Congregationalists are of the tradition freed

from ecclesiastical homage, it is the Congregationalists who initially supported excluding Blacks from membership in churches because Blacks were unable to meet certain conditions continuing in the ethos of western thought.

While Congregationalists are traditionally autonomous and self-governed, early on they treated Blacks as slaves outside the church and as the estranged within the church. In fact, around 1646, Blacks, Catholics, and Presbyterians were religiously excluded from Congregationalism. The latter, however, accepts the Puritan's and Separatist's concepts of "justification by faith" and "the priesthood of all believers."[8]

According to A. Knighton Stanley, author of The Children Is Crying, the Pilgrims/Separatist group settled at Plymouth; and the Puritans/non-Separatist Congregationalist settled in Massachusetts Bay. It was this latter group that had the greatest influence on American Congregationalism. The most essential tenet of Congregationalism distinctive from Puritanism is "the prevailing nineteenth century democratic accents on individual rights and religious liberty."[9]

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[8]Stanley, Knighton A., "The Children is Crying," chap. in AN OLD SPIRIT IN NEW FORM (New York/Philadelphia: The Pilgrim Press, 1979), p. 11.

[9]Gunnemann, Louis H., "The Shaping of the United Church of Christ," chap. in FROM MOVEMENT INTO DENOMINATION:THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN STORY, (New York: United Church Press, 1977), p. 137.

The impact of the Puritans who came to Massachusetts in the early 1600's and united to begin North American Congregationalism is both perilous and precious. Perilous because of what seems to be an overemphasis on autonomy, self-governance, and independence from ecclesiastical influence; and, precious because of its openness to social justice, equality, and tolerance for diversity.

In 1989, Robert Eric Fribrock Ewing presented his Ordination Paper to the Church and Ministry Commission of the Washington North Idaho Conference. He writes about each tradition's shortcoming and says of the Congregational tradition that its "emphasis on the local church can easily lead to the rejection of the connectedness of life in Christ." This local emphasis can also lead to the rejection of unity with the United Church of Christ.

In 1957, the Evangelical and Reformed and the Congregational Christian churches united to form the United Church of Christ. Though lean in representation of people of color, the United Church is a diverse church inclusive of women, homosexuals, and the physically challenged. Among the 6,338 congregations within the United Church of Christ, approximately 288 are African-American Churches (AAC). Seventy-five per cent of the 288 African American Churches descend from the Congregational Christian tradition. The other 25% are transitional churches, emerging out of the Reformed and Evangelical traditions or United Churches of

Christ that started after the union; for example, Trinity UCC in Chicago, Illinois, Imani UCC in Euclid, Ohio, Advent UCC in Columbus, Ohio, Amistad in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Heritage in Reston, Virginia, Faith in Washington, D. C., and Harambee in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Most of the transitional neighborhoods (white flight) necessitated the calling of African American leadership and Pastors to these churches in the mid-sixties. There are a few transitional neighborhoods in the nineties. In some of these neighborhoods, Conferences and/or Associations are abandoning the facility and resisting leadership development.

A little less than fifty percent (134) of the African American Churches are located in the Southern Conference. For clarification purposes the reader should know that it takes a number of churches to make an Association, and a number of Associations make a Conference. Combined, these entities make the National Church, headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio.

The National United Church of Christ is a liberal, open and affirming church. Conversely, the local churches are more likely to be conservative. For example, the constitution of the United Church of Christ affirms diverse leadership in the church even though only approximately 2% of the leadership population are people of color. It is this segment of the population, however, that is taking

church growth and evangelism serious enough to be the fastest growing segment.

According to the Office of the Secretary's 1993 Annual Report, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries ("A Listing of African-American Churches and Pastors"), and The Commission for Racial and Social Justice of the United Church of Christ, outside of the Southern Conference where there are 134 African American Churches, the others are clustered in the following Conferences:

	AFRICAN AMERICAN	OTHER CHURCHES OF COLOR
Central Atlantic	11	
Illinois	9	
Michigan	5	1
New York	20	
Indiana/Kentucky	3	
California	4	1
Ohio	5	1
Florida	1	
South East	2	
South Central	11	

In 1993, there were 28 African American pulpits available and/or in the search process. Two major, established, tall steeple United Churches of Christ pulpits have been filled by African American, ordained females in 1994; the Reverend Pamela June Anderson in Detroit, Michigan and the Reverend Dr. Susan Newman in Atlanta, Georgia.

Concerning The Church on the Hill, it is located in Northwest Detroit. Less than two miles due North is the nearest suburb. Less than three miles to the East there are upper middle class income homes. The poor, homeless, and unemployed are evident within two miles due South. And

within a two mile radius to the West is the Northwest Activity Center, Lewis College of Business, small businesses, hospitals, and the United Church of Christ Evangelical Home for senior citizens.

The closest major thoroughfare is two blocks from the church. There, entrepreneurs have developed an "Avenue of Fashions" and businesses are building and boosting both the economy and the stability of the community.

The first African American family joined The Church on the Hill in 1965. Today, both the neighborhood and the church's membership and attendance is 98% African American.

The gorgeous church facility includes an educational wing, a fireside parlor, a chapel, a conference room, nine bathrooms, a fellowship hall with a stage, three kitchens (one fully equipped for commercial use), four offices, a choir room, a youth room, an under-developed third floor with four unfinished offices or class rooms and space for five additional offices, two parking lots, and a beautiful sanctuary with the capacity to accommodate 500 people. The church is situated at the highest elevation point in the city, thus identified as, known for, and referred to as "The Church on the Hill" since the 1960's when African Americans started joining. During white flight (1965-1975), the European Americans abandoned this facility and left it mortgage and debt free.

The majority of the people who remained are exhausted

from eleven years of membership decline, extreme and repetitive disagreements, and long term struggles to keep the church doors open. According to the 1979 Annual Report of the church, membership was almost a thousand. The accumulative number of worshippers exceeded six thousand and the average Sunday attendance was over three hundred. By 1990, the accumulative number of worshippers for the year was less than a thousand and the average Sunday attendance was less than 100. In fact the 1990 income was less than $50,000 as compared to a $100,000 budget being easily met in 1979.

The Church on the Hill has traditional boards, committees, and auxiliaries:

- The Diaconate counsels and assists the pastor with the spiritual interest of the church, confers with candidates for church membership, visits the sick and confined; and makes appropriate recommendations to the church on matters of outreach.
- The Christian Education Board is primarily responsible for the general supervision of the Church School. This Board is also responsible for the planning and the implementing of Christian education.
- The Mission Education and Social Action Board seeks to awaken interest in the larger service of church and the United Church of Christ at home and abroad in accordance with the Church Covenant; and also has

general oversight of raising the benevolence commitment and special offerings of the Church.

- The Trustee Board and Pastor are responsible for the financial and physical welfare of the church as directed by the church. This Board also prepares a budget for adoption at regularly called meeting of the Church.
- The Usher's Committee meets, greets, and seats the gathering community, receives tithes and offerings, and attends to the pragmatic functions of the worship experience.
- The Music Committee has general oversight of the choir, the instrumentalist, music director(s), and the music of the church.
- The Nominating Committee recommends persons to fill all elected positions mandated by the Constitution/By-Laws.
- The Higher Education Committee helps develop and maintain guidelines for the receipt and distribution of scholarship funds. This Committee is also responsible for disseminating information about needs and programs pertaining to institutions of higher learning related to the United Church of Christ.

Each of these church entities and those developing, are cooperative and in consultation with the pastor. There are a few members who consider the pastor an employee of the church. On the other hand, there is overwhelming support

from church members to view the pastor as the Spiritual Leader, Administrative Head, and Christ's representative and designee.

According to the 1990 Census, State of Michigan, Wayne County, The Church on the Hill is almost centered in a zip code area that encompasses 47,887 people. The zip code area is bound on the north by Eight Mile Road, on the south by Six Mile Road, on the west by Myers, and on the east by Pontchatrain Drive. Other compositions of importance include:

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

- 13,675 School enrollment of persons 3 years and over.
- Pre-primary school 721
- Elementary or high school 8,381
- College 4,573

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

- Less than 9th grade 2,210
- 9 - 12th grade, no diploma 5,598
- High school graduate 7,124
- Some college, no degree 7,589
- Associates degree 1,906
- Bachelor's degree 3,535
- Graduate/Professional degrees 3,202

Astoundingly, of the total number of ancestry reported in the zip code area (44,716), the ethnicity represented in descending order is German (740), Irish (514),

American/United States (449), West Indian (303), English (298), Subsaharan African (281), Polish (273), and French (173).

Of the houses built since 1939, most were built between 1940 and 1949 (6,818), and 1950 and 1959 (3,732). From 1989 and 1990, only 39 additional houses were built. The majority of these houses are three bedrooms (8,886). 3,474 are not mortgaged.

The median household income was $31,904 in 1989. The median family income was $37,824. The per capita income was $13,792.

The Bagley Elementary School, which is within three blocks of the church, is where the church held its services until a portion of the current facilities were erected in 1930. The population in the area is approximately 20,000 people and distributed by age as follows:

1990 Age Distribution	Number
10 - 14 years	1,828
15 - 17 years	1,240
18 - 24 years	831
25 - 34 years	2,075
35 - 44 years	3,202
45 - 54 years	1,707
55 - 64 years	1,189
65 - 74 years	626
75 years plus	446

The average household income projected for 1990 was $38,504. The Racial/Ethnic distribution is slightly different from the demographics based on Zip Code:

White (Non-Hispanic)	3,001
Black (Non-Hispanic)	8,537
Other (Non-Hispanic)	135
Hispanic	115

The assessment to date strongly indicates that the majority of the church membership lives within the 48221 zip code. Seventy per cent of the 156 members are college graduates with a large concentration of educators. There is an appreciable number of business persons with a wide range of skills, gifts, talents, and abilities. Generally, the membership willingly shares with cooperative leadership and church efforts.

The age range of the congregation is interesting. Of the 156 members, 40% are over 55 years of age. Forty per cent are between 45 and 64. The remaining 20% are a mixture of youth (22 years and younger), regular visitors, and spectators. It is generally accepted that 60% of the population of the United States is considered unchurched. This is also true of the Bagley Community in which the church is located. The kind of intentional thrust toward envisioned outreach and in-reach ministry should strengthen the appeal of The Church on the Hill as a nurturing, caring, loving, compassionate community of believers in Spiritual

Transformation and Rebirth from the Christ/African centered perspective.

In 1993, the church entered into a Revisioning Process. The word Revisioning is not, per se, defined in the documents of the church. In essence, however, revisioning means assessing the potential of an existing congregation which has experienced decline in membership, decline in stewardship, and decline in growth; and, based on the assessment, redirecting the focus and establish goals for becoming a stronger church.

The primary assumption in revisioned church development is that a revisioned church will acquire characteristics of an enduring institution/community where people will join the congregation, bringing human and fiscal resources which help strengthen the church as a spiritual and missional place. The goal of revisioned church development is that of securing the institutional base of the congregation in order for the congregation to embark upon new styles of congregational life and become effective instruments of God's love.

The Revisioning Process included four sessions with an average of 50 participants. These persons completed (1) A Local Church Rating Guide and (2) A Moral Assessment Instrument. Participants were invited to share individually and in small groups their faith journey and a dream trip work sheet.

The final two steps in the process included the development of a mission statement and a process by which eight (8) priorities were developed as future directions for the congregation. Using a scale from 1 (positive response) to 5 (negative response), the overall attitude of the participants in the following areas is revealing:

- Trust in their environment received an average rating of four.
- Believing they can pay their way received an average rating of 3.5.
- When asked if the church could point to successes the average response was three.
- Do the people feel cared about? The average rating was three.
- Is the church open to different, new ideas? The average rating was four.

The Miller Multiphasic Congregational Profile helped to confirm major areas of strengths and weaknesses. According to this tool, the strength in the congregation is among the people who exercise their creative gifts and great talent. The membership roll at the time of the Revisioning Process was approximately 169 active members. There is also an abiding faith in a merciful, grace giving, caring, loving God whose will the people attempt to discern for their life together as a witnessing, serving, worshiping, liberating community of faith moving toward the future with hope.

The weaknesses reflected a negative factor regarding structure, goals, objectives, and directions. Some of the pessimism projected can be attributed to particular members

who have experienced substantial amounts of destructive conflict in the last several years. The conflicts have compounded; partially because of issues and concerns revolving around pastoral leadership, interim pastoral leadership, the search process, and the struggle for power.

The surrounding community's major institutions are also struggling with the issues of education, health care, business development, and urban area challenges - crime, violence, and drugs. Considering community issues, the church composed the following eight priorities:

- Stewardship emphasis including increased financial stability.
- Evangelism and church growth.
- Youth Leadership development.
- Bible study/church school.
- Social Justice/outreach ministry with community emphasis.
- Unity of church as community/family.
- Focus on worship service and music with strong emphasis on preaching/spiritual development.
- Mission.

Four sessions were held which included representatives among the membership, committees, and major boards. An average of 50 people per session participated. The first session included introducing:

- The planning process, scope, design, and time line of the Revisioning Process.
- Faith Perspective.

- Pilgrimage in church life individually and in small groups.

- Data gathering and interpretation - Small Groups and Plenary Sessions, and Dream Trip Work sheet.

- Learning from records, past and present, and envisioning the future.

- The process of mission statement development, direction selection, goal development, and action plans.

The second session included:

- Identity of action

- Who are you/Who are we?

- Who have you/we become?

- What do you see?

- What do you say?

- People of the Story (Being, Telling, Doing)

- Life together organizationally

- Who is in charge here? A model or organizational development.

- Mission, power, structure, and resources using the book "Twelve Keys to An Effective Church" by Kennon L. Callahan.

- Developing a Mission Statement.

The third session included:

- Clarifying goals and future directions.

- What do we celebrate/what do we affirm?

- Who we are and want to be?

- How to get from here to there?

- Mission Statement Process.

- Small group work.

- The Mission Statement of the church.
- The Mission of the church.

The fourth session included:

- Images of the people of God as servant people, sharing stories.
- Church.
- Biblical witness.
- Focusing values.
- Embodying, embracing, demonstrating the Good News.
- Directions, goals/goals statement development.
- Clarifying directions and goals.
- Mission Statement - the mission of Mayflower.
- Possibility statements - in the future our church will...?

The Revisioning Proposal consisted of three (3) parallel tracks that merged at the end of September, 1993, with the church calling new pastoral leadership and the acceptance of a renewed and refocused direction for the church by all the members.

Track 1 entailed the selection of a strong United Church of Christ Interim Pastor. This person was to be committed to the United Church of Christ. Since former interims had been accused of splitting the church by entering the candidacy process, emphasis was placed on the National policy which strongly suggest on site interims, assistants, and associates seek pulpits other than the one on location. Because of the ramifications of inherited

pulpits, it was made clear and documented that interims should not be candidates for Pastor. The Ministerial Standing of the interim was held by the Detroit Metropolitan Association to assure that the policy would be rigorously pursued.

The Interim Pastor was to assist the congregation in (1) coming to terms with its history by helping the congregation work through the dynamics of grief or conflict; thus, freeing the congregation to celebrate its history and look to the future with confidence; (2) Discovering a new identity by helping the congregation look at who they are in light of where they wanted to go; (3) Discovering new enthusiasm for ministry by doing ministry together and trying new things for God; (4) Helping the congregation prepare for a new pastor by moving the congregation away from being trapped or tied to the past and moving toward healthier thoughts and feelings about themselves; and (5) helping the congregation understand and relate to its denomination by lifting up the covenant among the local church, the Detroit Metropolitan Association, the Michigan Conference, and the United Church of Christ as a whole.

Tract 2 was the Search Process for new pastoral leadership. Throughout the process, the Conference placement consultant worked with the Search Committee and assisted in: (1) Identifying and placing a strong UCC interim pastor for the congregation; (2) Providing training

and organization for the Search Committee, establishing a time line for their work, and introducing the United Church of Christ resources available to assist the Committee in their work (A Local Church Seeks a Pastor, for example); (3) Developed a realistic and appropriate Congregational Profile to be circulated to potential candidates; and (4) Actively helped in enlisting good potential candidates who were available for the congregation to consider, trained the Committee in ways of reading and evaluating potential candidate profiles, and helped plan the interview time with potential candidates.

Track 3 - members of the Revisioning Process were to develop a Mission Statement and a Vision Statement. It was determined that the Mission of the church was to witness the living Christ's presence in the life of the church and to endeavor to offer healing and hope to all who entered the church. The church agreed to develop, maintain, and strengthen each other in love; respect and support each other's individual differences; and strive daily to love their neighbor as Christ loves the Church.

The Vision Statement in essence spoke to the church's effort to become a more spiritual, caring, compassionate, and loving community of faith whose goal is to inspire, encourage, and create a unifying, nurturing environment in which its members seek to discern and follow the will of God and the teaching of Jesus as found in the Scriptures. The

historical evolution of the Congregational Christian Tradition of United Church of Christ becomes a meaningful canvas upon which to etch the future of The Church on the Hill.

Having experienced abandonment by those who created the institution and the absence of permanent, full time leadership for nearly twelve years, the struggle of the church for direction seriously impeded any significant growth of the congregation or the church's ministry. Conversely, however, a small dedicated, caring, and loving congregation, whose faith in God was the mortar that bound this small congregation, maintained a semblance of church ministry for eleven years. The nucleus for a strong church continues at The Church on the Hill.

A pastor being called by the congregation has a unique challenge to direct and guide this small but strong congregation towards meaningful goals, objectives, and structure. The challenge is as much in prodding this congregation to be receptive to establishing goals as it is to constructively massaging and directing a very strong minded group of Christians. The excitement of having the leadership responsibility lies in the diverse talents and abilities available within the congregation, and the hunger of the members to put these talents to use in the service to God and in the service to the church.

The Church on the Hill, having gone through the loss of

membership, stabilized leadership, and financial support, has survived and become a stronger entity because they had to depend upon themselves. The Church on the Hill is ripe with opportunities for unbelievable growth in church in-reach, community outreach, Christian ministry, and quality service to the uplifting of the Christian spirit.

The pastor of The Church on the Hill is blessed to have a congregation that unanimously says "I want to serve - use me." Members are ready to launch a new chapter in their history that will be a standard for the revision of Christian discipleship. With no building debt, the church can dedicate its finances to mission, ministry, and maintenance. All of these pieces in place positions the church to develop a dynamic model for Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth.

Over a period of time, most of the areas identified will come to fruition. Accepting ourselves as African American people attempting to "sing a new song in a foreign land" is, however, of grave importance for a people revisioning our direction. It is also the place in the process where the membership clearly exhibits the highest level of discomfort.

The name of the church, the worship style, and the mind set of the people has Eurocentricity as a sacred cow. Cornel West, in RACE MATTERS, refers to Afrocentrism as a contemporary species of black nationalism attempting to

define an African identity in a white, hostile society. "This is gallant," he continues, "because it puts black doings and sufferings, not white anxieties and fears, at the center of discussion."[10] It is misguided, however, because we are silent on issues peculiar to African Americans.

West enumerates issues relatively new in the forefront of our struggle. West addresses issues of class, retrograde views on black women, and gay men and lesbian's reluctance to link race to the common good. In THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK, Du Bois declares in the Forethought that the problem in America is the color line.

Both of these great thinkers and writers are appropriate references for understanding broader concerns. However, Asante's approach to studying and defining African Centeredness synergizes the focal point of this project. In KEMET, AFROCENTRICITY AND KNOWLEDGE, Asante proposes three cluster terms for looking at African centered studies (1) Cultural/aesthetic - the creative, artistic, and inventive aspect of human phenomena which demonstrates the expression of values, arts, and the good; (2) Social/behavioral - the area of knowledge that deals with human behavior in relationship to the cosmos, other humans (living or dead), and self; and (3) Policy Issues - the areas of discussion and debate around what should or ought to be political,

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[10]West, Cornel., RACE MATTERS, (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc., 1993), p. 7.

social, cultural, or economic actions in response to critical conditions affecting African communities in relation to health, education, welfare, and employment.[11]

The Hope - The Spiritually Transforming Purpose

In MALCOLM X AS CULTURAL HERO AND OTHER AFROCENTRIC ESSAYS by Molefi Kete Asante, a composite of Asante's multi-definition and use of African Centeredness can be paraphrased to read that African Centered people perceive origin, data, knowledge, phenomena, and perspective from the standpoint of Africa as opposed to Europe. That is to say, African Centeredness is not a racial perspective, it is a cultural orientation to data. The Church on the Hill has a European centered orientation to data.

The proposed project is to develop a process of addressing mission and ministry as a reflection of the current constituency. The model for the process is one of Christ/African Centeredness, Spiritual transformation and rebirth in response to concurrent and projected changes in demographics within **The History - The Spiritually Transforming Place.**

Since the onset of community transformation, the church has also changed. It is now 99% African American with bloodlines influenced by Indian, Irish, and German lineage.

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[11]Molife Kete Asante, "Classificatory Aspects of Africalogy," subchap. in KEMET, AFROCENTRICITY AND KNOWLEDGE (Trenton, N.J.: African World Press, Inc., 1990), pp. 19-22.

Through mission development and quality service ministry, Christ/African Centeredness, Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth will, by necessity, require a church name, mission, and ministry change that reflects the community's transition. Having tested the waters and discovered that the congregation is intolerable to changing the church name at this time, the strategy to use preaching, teaching, seminars, workshop, worship experiences, mission and leadership development opportunities to expose the church to Christ/African centered spirituality is being implemented; while concurrently garnering support for a new church name -- L'Amistad Congregational United Church of Christ.

The movement towards acceptance of Christ/African centered spirituality can be prodded by participation in a comparative study about the Mayflower and the La Amistad ships for the purpose of delineating the differences in the meaning of their names, the motivation for their voyage, the intended purpose of their passengers, their points of departure, etc., from Asante's cluster terms for looking at African centeredness.

Members of The Church on the Hill struggle for identification and an identity peculiar to its constituency. The transition from the Eurocentrism to a multi-cultural multi-racial, African American church community is an invisible reality without an identification of its own. As

long as the European nomenclature is visible, the multi-cultural/multi-racial, African American identity is invisible.

Identifying with that reality is a part of revisioning a new church with a new name and a new pride in (1) who we are, (2) Whose we are, and (3) what our purpose is in a 21st century.

Asante also refers to Carter G. Woodson and Asa Hilliard's reference to what Western education does to African people when he quotes "the educational systems of the West conspire to keep African people ignorant of themselves" (KEMET, p. 163). We must learn and focus attention on the African presence in the Bible, in World History, and in all of creations' place of origin - Africa.

THE THEOLOGY OF CHANGE

Theological Foundation Statement

Naming is important in the African tradition as well as in Holy Writ. Naming assists in identifying meaning, purpose, and direction in Biblical and African names. In Asante's introduction to The Book of African Names, he addresses the need to develop name books as a response to a cultural necessity to "provide guidance in the important naming function."[12]

Dr. Asante's principles of naming includes the following caution: "the use of African names must be governed by an appreciation of African culture;" and an awareness that "all African names are not necessarily positive for cultural and spiritual rebirth."[13] That is to say, you don't just change your name or adopt a name for the sake of changing. A new name implies a change in perspective, direction, and attitude.

There are also persons in Biblical History whose names were changed by the dominant culture and by God. And there is at least one Biblical Character who changed his own name. Esther 2:7 and Daniel 1:6,7 are the best examples of Biblical characters whose names were changed by the dominant culture. In the first reference it is written "And he

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[12]Molife Kete Asante, The Book of African Names, (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, Inc., 1991), p. 7.

[13]Ibid., p. 7.

brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother..." The second reference reads "Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, Shadrach; and to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego."

Most people in the pews and pulpits are consciously unaware of the fact the Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are Babylonian assigned names. These Babylonian names are reinforced in African American church music and preaching as well as in the fact that they are called Hebrew boys. In the first place, surviving the fiery furnace at the hand of the God of the oppressed would surely make a man out of any boy (Daniel 3:25); and in the second place, God had long since named the Hebrews Israel (Genesis 32:28).

Three examples of Biblical characters whose names were changed by God are recorded in Genesis 17:5, 15, and 32:28, respectively.

> "What's more," God told him, "I am changing your name. It is no longer 'Abram' ('Exalted Father'), but 'Abraham'..."
>
> Then God added, "Regarding Sarai your wife - her name is no longer 'Sarai' but 'Sarah' ('Princess'). And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and make her the mother of nations! Many kings shall be among your posterity."
>
> "What is your name?" the Man asked. "Jacob," was the reply. "It isn't anymore!" the Man told him. "It is Israel - one who has power with God."

The one individual who changed his own name is Saul of Tarsus. The transition becomes evident with his encounter with the Lord near Damascus (Acts 9:3-6). The first reference to him as "Saul, (who also is called Paul,)" is in Acts 13:9. There is no mention of God changing his name. Paul's changing of his own name indicates his change in perspective. Perhaps the community referred to him as Saul-Paul. Nonetheless, his new perspective called for an outward sign of an inward reality.

It is the stated opinion of some that Saul did not have a conversion experience but an immediate evolution of perspective - from oppressing God's people to opening God's people up to a new reality - freedom in Christ. When Saul's perspective about God's people changed from persecuting God's people to promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he manifested this change in perspective by changing his name to Paul.

There are also broad invitations from Jesus Christ to all of humanity to enter into the process of change. The Matthean litany "You have heard it said...but I say", is one example of change as a process.

Another example is found in John 3:1-21. Jesus is in dialogue with Nicodemus, a master religious teacher of Israel, about a new perspective. Jesus not only acknowledges the important role Nicodemus exhibited in his belief (religion), but also the momentous need to have

Someone to believe in (relationship). The answer Jesus gave Nicodemus was a process answer, "you must be born again...by water and Spirit."

Other process oriented Scriptures reflect upon persons going through change and making decisions about change. Just the mere fact that we go from the Old Testament to the New Testament is a part of the big umbrella of change.

On a much broader scale, there is the systemic challenge associated with the process of the exodus. When Moses went to Pharaoh and said 'thus says the Lord, let my people go,' Pharaoh replied "who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." (Exodus 5:2).

The Age of the Pharaohs created a political, economic, and social system exclusive of and insensitive to the culturally and spiritually based systems of Israel. Comparatively, the founders and inheritors of the Mayflower Congregational Church are tantamount to the leadership of Rameses' day (Exodus 12:37) and the people of L'Amistad are analogous to the people of color in the first millennium.

Similarly, Psalms 137:4 raises this question from God's people "how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" The people of God sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept as they remembered Zion - the homeland. They were commanded to work out a way to worship. Verse 3 says "For there they that carried us away captive required of us a

song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'"

The name change of the church gives direct identification and identity to the people who were brought out of Egypt, out of exile, out of bondage, and out of slavery. Maintaining a Eurocentric name helps us forget this great thing God has done for us.

African Americans in diaspora are a people in a strange land, trying to sing home songs, trying to reach back to the ancestry for identity, identification, insight, spiritualism, and survival techniques while in foreign residence. This, too, is a form of being born again.

God's people reached Canaan after forty years in the wilderness. Canaan was industrialized, so to speak. Yet God strongly advised Israel to avoid mingling, ministering, and marrying the people of Canaan. Israel was to keep their own religion, their own God, and their own culture. Instead, they forgot what God had done for them. The African American church represents a people standing on the shoulders of ancestry. All over the United States, post-modern, some Eurocentric and most Afrocentric leadership is reaching back to human place of origin (Africa) in search for identity, identification, insight, spiritualism, and survival techniques.

Dr. Robert O. Bland, Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs of the Lewis College of Business in

Detroit, Michigan, shares a story to the effect that in the thirties the WPA recorded a slave narrative of an eighty year old couple's response to slavery.

> "The woman responded to her massa's kindness. In fact, her massa was a physician who not only provided the best health care and nourishment; but also refused to beat her. Therefore, she would gladly return to being his slave. Her husband, however, shared his appreciation for such a massa but would not go back **because** the massa wanted him to be his slave."[14]

When one deals with the notion and the process of change, resistance is to be expected. There are going to be detractors who are comfortable with captivity. In captivity, people have assimilated to the system's way of taking care of them. The process of change means accepting God's call on God's people to love our neighbors as ourselves and, therefore, love God.

No other continent on earth, save Africa -- stripped of 250 million of her best people -- could have survived without the physicians, trades-people, artists, spiritual leaders, etc., exiled over a 1500 year period. Yet, she rises from the ashes of the African/Slavery Holocaust.

An historical account of The Mayflower as well as The L'Amistad will provide the contrast between two peoples, their destiny, and their intent. The L'Amistad event, for example, is a theological vision acted upon by a people who wanted justice, freedom, and self-definition. It was born

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[14]Dr. Robert O. Bland, interview by author, Tape Recording, Detroit, Michigan, November, 1994.

out of the context of opposing slavery. The Mayflower, on the other hand, is theologically rooted in the antithesis to justice, freedom, and self-definition.

In telling the history of The L'Amistad it is important to remember the antithetical references to freedom and newness of life as recorded in Ephesians 6:5-9, Colossians 3:22, Titus 2:9, and I Peter 2:18. These theological references are associated with The Mayflower. These texts not only reinforce the household codes of women having a place, but also provide a particular place for people of color, as determined by the economics within the dominant culture.

Focusing on the "slave obey your master" theology limits the vision of another reality. Paul makes the stronger case for changing one's name as an identification to one's changing perspective. He decided he was walking in a new way and, therefore, no longer wanted to be identified with the system's definition of him.

While raising the ire of conservative critics in society and in the church, Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology, Womanist Theology, and Afrocentrism affect obvious changes that attribute to the increasing awareness and inclusivity of women and people of color. Simple references to mailman, chairman, congressmen, or service men as mail person, chairperson, members of congress or congress persons, and members of the armed services makes the point.

Instead of the stereotypical references supporting connotations associated with nigger, negro, and colored, there is increasing usage of the general phrase 'people of color' as distinguished from colored people and African American; as well as Asian American, Native American, etc. These latter references identify a people in relationship to a land.

Purpose of the Process

Personal Goals:

1. To become more knowledgeable about the history of the colonial ship, The Mayflower; and the slave ship, The L'Amistad.
2. To learn more about ways of dismantling the dynamics that make for self-hatred and, therefore, denial of who and Whose God's people of color are.
3. To subdue the internalized oppression among people of color.
4. To overcome the passive resistance associated with naming, defining, and claiming the African American history, heritage, and hope.
5. To develop articulate, persuasive verbalization of Afrocentricity.
6. To understand more about God's call on the African American community.

Project Goals:

1. To teach recognition and acknowledgement of African presence in the Bible, in world history, and in all of creation's place of origin - Africa.
2. To raise community and church awareness of African centeredness and connectedness to the concept of 'the village' and worship of God.
3. To develop and implement a process for changing the name of the church from Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ to L'Amistad Congregational United Church of Christ.

Methodology

The process for changing the name of the church is extracted from the 1993 Revisioning Process of the church that addresses discovering a new identity.

The data collected will be based on the following pre-survey questions, a Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth Survey, verbal responses to notable visible and audible changes within the worship experience, outreach focus, and spiritual development opportunities associated with the church.

PRE-SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Do you know what your personal name means and its origin? For example, my surname is Anderson. I do not know what it means but I do know that my paternal grandmother's slave name was Vonner and she married an Anderson.

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2. Do you know the importance of names in the African culture? Yes_____ No_____

3. Do you know the importance of names in the Biblical culture? Yes_____ No_____

4. How are names chosen in families?_____

_____

5. How much do you know about the colonization period?

_____

6. What do you know about chattel slavery?_____

_____

7. How many Blacks were allowed in the Congregational Church in Plymouth, Mass., in 1620?_____

8. What is the Amistad?_____

_____

9. How did the American Missionary Association become involved in the Amistad?_____

_____

10. What is the American Missionary Association today?

_____

_____

11. Why did the (now) United Church of Christ become involved in the Amistad?_____

_____

12. Who were the two principle persons involved in the Amistad case?_____

_____

13. How do you feel about the church name Mayflower?

_____

_____

14. If the name of our church is changed to L'Amistad, how will it give you a greater sense of mission and planning for growth as we move into the 21st Century?

_____

_____

15. What can the church do to help you feel knowledgeable and comfortable with explaining the name change to your family and friends?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Summary and Resource Review

The Focus of the project is based on the Revisioning Process of the church from the Christ/African centered perspective as it relates to spiritual transformation and rebirth, the importance of naming, identification, and identity. Research will include comparing the colony ship (Mayflower) with the slave ship (Amistad, also known as L'Amistad and LaAmistad) and taking the congregation through a process of various experiences in order to clarify how holding onto the Eurocentric name is a way of denying our African centered heritage.

A Pre-survey will be used to assess the members knowledge and level of anxiety about change. Spiritual transformation and rebirth emphases will be used to measure participation, progress, policy changes, mission direction, and acceptance of a church name change. The theological

pieces to be used include inspirational literature and Biblical Scriptures that address: (1) process - "You must be born again...; You have heard it said, but I say...; Be transformed by the renewing of your minds;" (2) consequences of change - Joseph and his brothers' jealousy over a father's love versus the family being saved out of Joseph's position; Jacob's injured hip; and (3) doubts and fears about change - the Sanhedrin and Jesus' theology (walking the second mile).

Overall, the interim motivation of the focus project is to attain knowledge of our culture, acknowledgement of our heritage, appreciation for our African selves, and clarity of the mission of the church - establishing new identification and identity.

The resource review is comprised of an annotated bibliography of materials directly related to the research necessary to understand the components of the focus project. Therefore, the annotated bibliography and the bibliography provides a listing of books that directly address the Mayflower (a Colonial Ship) and the L'Amistad (a slave ship); the passengers, their purpose for sailing, the intent of the voyage, the dynamics of process, and the significance of naming; thinkers and writers who defend and oppose African in the diaspora, African Americans, and women as objects.

Materials critical to a Theological perspective on

naming is lacking. To date, the resources identified regarding naming are Afrocentric in perspective. The resource closest to addressing the theological perspective on naming is All the Divine Names and Titles in the Bible by Herbert Lockyer. Lockyer, however, discusses in length the Divine names and titles in the Bible as they relate to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. What is needed are resources that speculate God's reason for name changing.

RESULT OF THE FINDINGS

Beginning Within

Approximately 32 years ago my dad and I went to a national tire chain to purchase the obvious. When we arrived at this national tire chain, I explained to the young man what I wanted and he dutifully proceeded to acquisition the same.

About an hour after the car had been taken, I strolled to the area where mechanics were mounting tires and out of curiosity inquired about the tire identification process. That is to say, the distinguishing features among steel belted, radials, and regulars, etc. The mechanic looked at me rather puzzled and said "by the name embossed on the sidewall of the tire."

Satisfied with his answer, I looked at the tires they were putting on the family automobile and mentally noted that they were regular tires. I wanted to ask another question but decided to leave it alone for the moment. I sauntered back to the front waiting room and joined my dad until we were called to drive away. But the question "if we paid for steel belted radials, why is he putting on regulars?" would not go away.

When Dad and I arrived back at the same place where we made the order and paid the bill, I casually ask "why did you accept money for four steel belted radials and order regular tires to be mounted?"

My dad became enraged that I would dare question a white man and I remember his words as though he spoke them today. (We need to be careful about what we say and how we say it, at all times. Words not only have longevity but also emotional power in their own right). Dad said "shut up, girl. You don't know what you're talking about."

When I noticed that the young man had turned an embarrassing blue, I ignored Dad's rage and insisted on an answer. The young man spoke "we have run out of Steel Belted Radials and I wanted to make a sale. I never expected a woman and a [Black] man who appeared to be unable to read, to notice." Needless to say, the young man apologized and reimbursed my dad the difference. Had it been left up to me, more than an apology and a partial reimbursement would have been required for this blatant act of sexism and racism.

How much integrity and income had been stolen from my dad and, therefore, my entire family? What other lies influenced our thoughts, our bodies, and our spirits? These and other inquiries addressed in **The Heritage - The Spiritually Transforming Person** acknowledges the various episodes that resulted in my search for my spiritual self. The immediately shared incident, however, resulted in my search for my ethnic self.

With the knowledge that my father's orientation was greatly influenced by the circumstances of his birth and

successive lifestyle, Dad was unwilling and perhaps unable to attain enough education to override the years of racism, prejudice, and oppression he was born and reared to submit to. He internalized my paternal, enslaved grandmother's plantation mentality along with the shame and abusive verbiage affiliated with being a niggra.

My dad passed June 5, 1988. And though he was very critical of my search to accept myself, my people, and my God, I believe he was proud and hopeful that I would someday find Truth and vindicate my history, embrace my heritage, and reconcile my people with ourselves and our God.

In October of 1993, European Americans attending an Association council meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, questioned the wisdom of an African American woman pastoring a European church associated with the Daughters of the American Federation. When I informed them that the church I had been called to was neither European nor associated with the Federation, they responded with disbelief that an African American people would call themselves Mayflower.

When I mentioned this to several key persons after arriving at Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ, January 1, 1994, they said that they had never heard about themselves in this way. Neither had I among other African Americans or people of color. Mayflower was simply a name of a church and I had not considered its meaning from the spiritual, ethnic, historical, or global perspective.

In January of 1994, Dr. Mary Olson, Dean of the Doctoral Studies Program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, advised me that my Doctoral Project should be to change the name of the church from Mayflower to a name the reflects the constituency. Again I mentioned this to other members of the church and experienced similar responses of denial mentioned earlier. At this point, I decided that my Doctoral Project would be to establish an organization that would develop social justice, ethnic heritage, spiritual leadership, cultural arts, and rites of passage for boys and girls consciousness. To begin the ethnic heritage effort, I asked members of the church to address the congregation on the third Sundays on the subject "What Does It Means To Be An African Descendant Living In America?"

My search for ethnic and spiritual integrity has been periodically affirmed and challenged throughout the years, but most pointedly during African American History Month in February of 1994. During this African American History Month, I preached a modification of Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright's series "African Presence in the Bible." On the third Sunday in the same month, Dr. Marjorie Harris, President of Lewis College of Business, was the first presenter of the ethnic heritage effort. She proposed to the church a reason for the hundreds of children who walked past our church to and from school, and the thousands of cars driving past our

church to and from 'wherever.' They resist becoming a part of us because the name Mayflower is an identification people of color cannot spiritually or ethnically relate to. The congregation audibly groaned with disbelief at her proposal.

In retrospect, I understand the congregation's groaning. For 30 years the congregation had been safely and comfortably nestled within the walls of a debt free facility abandoned by the European community. And, oops, reality publicly beckoned the congregation to take their heads out of the sinking sands of denial. In a phrase, Dr. Harris advised us that we were not growing because we would not let go of our identification with a European ethos and embrace our African heritage and spirituality. I silently groaned because I would be accused of putting Dr. Harris up to saying this; though I had not, nor have not, previewed or censured the continuing third Sunday presentations on "What Does It Means to be an African Descendant Living In America?" This notwithstanding, Dr. Harris peaked my interest and the interest of several church members, resulting in three significant changes toward ethnic and spiritual relevancy:

1. The founding of the Community Alternative Resource Experience (C.A.R.E.) which is an outreach ministry providing leadership development experiences for youth, adults, and mature citizens in rites of passages, exposure to cultural and performing arts, creative

methods of resolving conflict, and building holistic relationship.

2. All new ministries bare an ethnic and/or spiritual identification. For example, the Nia Youth Choir; the Umoja Youth Group, the ministry for feeding the hunger is named L'Amistad Thanksgiving and Brown Bag; and our women's choral is named The Voices of Praise. Nia is Swahili for purpose; we have coined L'Amistad to mean 'we be free'; and Umoja (oo-mo-jah) is Swahili for unity and togetherness in the family, community, and the nation.

3. Church members in particular and the Detroit Community in general began identifying with and calling us by our motto: The Church On The Hill where prayer is changing people...and people are changing things.

Spiritual transformation and rebirth is literally taking place among church members desiring to embrace the truth about themselves. Spiritual transformation and rebirth is not only possible but perpetually available. It is as continual as the dynamic unfolding of the universe and as close to life as breathing. Spiritual transformation and rebirth requires: (1) Consciously accepting your spirit as your Creator's breath; (2) willingly seeking and fulfilling your purpose -- only your spirit knows its purpose; and (3) openly identifying and associating with people with kindred spirits.

Accepting Africa as the parent of life, language, and civilization will be the most difficult part of finding and fulfilling purposed spirituality. The world has been taught and come to believe that Africa is a dark continent where barbarians, savages, and ignorance reigns supreme. The European perspective demands top placement, first place, or center stage in all matters. But the Apocrypha, the Holy Koran, the Pentateuch, the Septuagint, the Hebrew Scriptures, and the Dead Sea Scrolls were written before European civilization.

For the exception of Rome, Italy and Greece, ancient inspirationals are about, for, and by people of color migrating in and out of Africa and Asia. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., world renown preacher and Senior Pastor of the Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois, rightfully concludes that European centeredness cannot credit the seat of civilization's political, economic, scientific, and cultural prowess, or human parenting to African or Asian ancestry. Thus, The Middle East is being created for the purpose of further eroding and ultimately erasing traces of other-centeredness.

Unlearning your years of assimilation and acceptance of superimposed misinformation is critical for your spiritual transformation and rebirth. For the exception of total amnesia, which implies involuntary dysfunctioning of the thinking process, tabula rosa of the mind is improbable.

Therefore, you must be born again in your spirit (John 3: 1-6) and transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2).

Mission and Ministry

As of 1 October 1995, the mission statement of our church has been printed in our bulletin and recited by the church body during our Sunday morning worship experience. It was developed and adopted during the 1993 Revisioning Process and reads as follows:

> The mission of the church is to witness that the living Christ is present in our lives. We will endeavor to offer healing and hope to all who enter our church. We will strive to break down all barriers that separate and alienate one from another. We will develop, maintain and strengthen each other in love. We will respect and support each other's individual differences. In keeping with Christ's admonition, we will strive daily to love our neighbor as Christ loves us.

While the intent of this Mission Statement is admirable and Biblically based, the latter being a requirement for spiritual transformation and rebirth, it excludes that portion of Christ's admonition regarding the 'self.'

The Pentateuch (Leviticus 19:18), the Gospels (Matthew 19:19; 22-39); the Epistles (Romans 13:9-10), the Toa, the Nation of Islam, and the unsung inspirationals clearly agree that the entire law is 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and your neighbor as yourself.' The 'your' cannot love 'neighbor' or God until the 'you' loves 'you.'

There are four basic types of love. Familial love - adoration for family and the family bloodline. Philia love - admiration for brotherhood and sisterhood. Eros love - appreciation for sexual drive. And agape love - the ultimate passion for Divine, Spirited response.

I Corinthians 13 characterizes agape as follows: Patience is the state of love's being - no hurry; kindness is love in action- without rashness; generosity is love in competition - not envious or jealous; humility is love in hiding - no parade, no pretense; courtesy is love in society - polite; unselfishness is love in essence - does not retaliate or seek revenge; good temper is love in disposition - never irritated or resentful; righteousness is love in conduct - glad about goodness to others, slow to expose, and eager to believe the best; sincerity is love in profession - never boastful or conceited, always just, joyful, and truthful, and knows how to be silent.

It is commonly said that God made the world out of nothing. I believe the world and all that is in it was made out of Agape; the same love spoken of in the greatest commandment and also the image and likeness you and I are created to reflect. Our mission or Divine assignment, therefore, is to love self, to love neighbor as self, and to love God. Spiritual transformation and rebirth also requires theologically inspired resources and resourcing which distinguishes the Personhood of God from the spirit

within living souls and nature. The study of God's nature from the African perspective does not divide the visibly created, secular world from the invisible, sacred spirit of creation. Dr. Obie Wright, former processor of Systematic Theology at Howard University Divinity School, expressed spirituality as the 'whole' creation from which other perspectives either separate from or further enhance. Dr. Wright would often remind us that 'we are a piece or apart of the whole.'[15]

The Pharisee of the nineties would separate the sacred from the secular in support of self-righteously and zealously holding to the letter of their interpretations of the law and to their own traditions, regardless of whether they nullify the Word of God or not. The Pharisee of Biblical times denied the supernatural, angels, and demons; and were Christ's bitterest enemies. They even accused Jesus of being in league with satan.

The characteristics of the Pharisee listed in Matthew 23:2-12 are: fault finding, holding to tradition in preference to God's Word, demanding all to follow their own outward religion; honoring God with lip service, not with the heart; vain worship; rejecting and casting aside God's laws and teachings; substituting religion for a relation with God; using religion to free anyone from parental

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[15]Dr. Obie Wright, Systematic Theology lecture, Howard University School of Divinity, Washington, D. C., 1982.

responsibility; and using religion as a means of personal gain.

John the beloved, so identified because he laid on the breast of Jesus, writes about a conversation between Jesus and Nichodemus the Pharisee. It was the Pharisee who received the Word you must be born again. Not of the flesh, but of the spirit. Iyanla Vanzant, author and nationally acclaimed speaker on spiritual matters, would call this rebirth 'insperiencing.'[16]

Juxtaposed against experience, insperience (within) is returning to your own beginning, acknowledging you began with spirit, and understanding that YOU are your own response. According to Vanzant everything that has life, can create life, nurtures life or serves a purpose in life, is spirit. The degree to which individuals are conscious of the promptings and guidance of 'spirit' is the degree to which individuals succeed in finding and fulfilling purpose or mission. Vanzant further advises that spirit will never push or ask to come forward. It will wait to be invited.

The supportive scripture to Vanzant's 'insperiencing' reads "it is the spirit that quickens: the flesh profits nothing; the words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63)." In essence, insperience requires consciousness of the mind, restraining the ego,

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[16]Vanzant, Iyanla, Tapping the Power Within (New York/London: Harlem River Press, 1992).

knowing who you are on the inside, and relying on Divine Spirit (breath).

When we have negative insperiences, we are being called on to teach someone a spiritual lesson. Conversely, when we have insperiences that present difficult choices or decision, the purpose is to learn trust, honesty, patience, and forgiveness. Embracing one or all these qualities results in being born again. When ignored, spiritual pain and/or physical pain ensues. If self is the object, be aware that the circumstances are not the result but an invitation to refine or focus your spirit.

The Reverend Linda "Shaheerah" Beatty provides practical exercises for spiritual transformation and rebirth in her book Wealth of a Spiritual Woman.[17] Silence is high on Beatty's list of priorities for developing within. Practicing silence will bring to your attention your mental, emotional, and spiritual strengths. One of my seminary classmates use to say "If you want to know how satan distracts us best, examine the lives of the hurried and loud." When you monitor your time, "hurry" is not necessary. When you live life listening, "loud" is counterproductive.

The Psalmist says "be still and know that I [God] am God (Psalms 46:10)." Therefore, when you set aside time for

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[17]Beatty, Linda "SHAHEERAH", The Wealth of a Spiritual Woman (Nashville, Tennessee: James C. Winston Publishing Company, 1995).

spiritual transformation and rebirth, follow this suggested prescription:

"Be still and know that God is God

"Be still and know that God is

"Be still and know God

"Be still and know

"Be still and

"Be still

"Be"

Beatty's chapter Seek Ye First The Kingdom of God points out the words of Jesus in Luke 17:21 which reads 'the kingdom of God is within you.' Here [within] you meet the real you. Being 'still' results in learning to 'listen' to and obeying the God within.

In addition to loving self, resourcing self with Biblical and inspirational literature, insperiencing, and practicing silence, spiritual transformation and rebirth requires self-forgiveness. When the disciples of Christ asked Him to teach them how to pray, the lesson included asking God to forgive us as we forgive others; again, placing 'self' at center stage. Forgiveness is consciously saying 'no' to self-indulgence, self-disrespect, low self-esteem, and internalized oppression. Theologically speaking, these characteristics are not of God or of God's Spirit (breath). Spiritual transformation and rebirth requires confessing or admitting to anti-God traits, saying

'no' to them, and consciously turning away from such things.

Vanzant, Shaheerah, Asante, Wright, West, yours truly, and hundreds of others in diaspora are journeying within; well aware of and practicing the African ancestral spirituality of Jesus who co-missions with us (1) to love God with all your heart, minds, soul, and strength; and, your neighbor as yourself; (2) to be spiritually born again; and (3) to seek first the Kingdom of God within you.

Initially, 'insperiencing' spiritual transformation and rebirth is uncomfortable, because we are use to doing life the same way, and unfamiliar because we've never done it that way. For some, it is more natural to be comfortable with the familiar, even familiar pain, than becoming comfortable with unfamiliar, even unfamiliar pleasure.

The story is told of a pet store proprietor who purchased a parrot to add variety to his collection. Over a period of weeks, the parrot comprehended the English language. One day a customer entered the store and the parrot said "ooooooowee! You have a 'tude.'" Of course, the customer was offended and left the store in a huff. The proprietor advised the parrot "if you do that again, we're going to have parrot soup."

The next time that customer came into the store, the parrot stared at him and with its eyes followed him every where he went in the store. Finally, the customer asked the parrot "what are you staring at?" The parrot paused,

inwardly listening to the proprietor's warning and said, with one eye closed and head slightly tilted, "y o u k n o w!"

Inside, you know that it is time for individual and community Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth.

Program Emphasis and Policy Changes

Within the United Church of Christ there is a common cliche "as the country goes, the church goes." Preceding the inception of the United Church of Christ in 1957, the Congregationalists were on the cutting edge and in the forefront for social justice. As a matter of fact, in the mid 1800's the Congregationalists were the first religious order to ordain a woman, Antoinette Brown. Since 1957, the United Church of Christ led the way in sit-ins, protests, boycotts, resolutions, and pronouncements. There are many examples to support the politically and socially correct agenda of the United Church of Christ.

THE INCLUSIVE CHURCH PRONOUNCEMENT was created to encourage the United Church of Christ to strive to become sensitive to gender free language in the written and spoken word. For example, we are more likely to use <u>chairperson</u> in lieu of <u>chairman</u>. It is also from this pronouncement that we have come to understand that God should be referred to as <u>God</u> instead of <u>He</u>; quoting John 3:16 as "for God so loved the world that God gave God's only begotten Son" instead of quoting "for God so loved the world that He gave His

only..."

THE JUST PEACE CHURCH PRONOUNCEMENT is grounded in God's activity in creation and shows the desire of God to sustain the world and not destroy it. The entire church benefits from thinking about the things that make for peace; which is much more than the absence of war. This Pronouncement invites the church to participate in reducing current concentrations of economic and political power, empowering the poor to make effective decisions on social systems, and rejecting all labeling of others as enemies and the creation of institutions which perpetuate enemy relations.

Becoming an INTEGRITY OF CREATION, JUSTICE AND PEACE CHURCH heightens the constituencies' awareness regarding the use of biodegradable materials and challenges the government's way of transporting nuclear waste.

The passing of the MULTI-CULTURAL/MULTI-RACIAL PRONOUNCEMENT calls us to celebrate ourselves instead of separating from one another because of our ethnic, culture, and gender differences. We recognize our differences - but not as deficiencies. We acknowledge our distinctions - but not as divisions. We dialogue about our dissimilarities - but not as discords. We address our autonomy - but not as a means of being disconnected. We discuss our diversity - but not as an antithesis to our unity in Christ Jesus.

It is by turning the cliche around and working on the

axiom that "as the church goes, the country goes" that the United Church of Christ in general and individual members in particular realize social justice programs and policy emphasis is not enough.

In the immediate past five years policy decision makers and program development persons recognized that local churches were declining in membership, financial, and human resources. Adjacent responses to this rude awakening caused local, state, and national church leadership to examine alternatives to existing policy and program emphasis. Alternatives identified and implemented include: starting new churches, revisioning traditional congregations, emphasizing evangelism and church growth, accentuating spiritual transformation and rebirth, and distinguishing and financing ordained leadership willing to implement the alternatives.

A new church start, challenged by the opportunity to envision and build for the future, differs from the revisioned church. The revisioned church adds to the challenge a tension between the church conceived in the 17th Century and the church fitting for the 21st Century. When I arrived at the Revisioned Church, politics par excellence was the order of the day, autonomy was the prevailing attitude, and decisions were made by majority vote.

The first congregational meeting in January, 1994, was also the Annual Church Meeting. The Congregational

standards required an Annual Report from the new pastor who had been on board only three weeks. Handicapped by the absence of a year's experience, I submitted the following STATEMENT OF THE VISION:

> "You and I have dreams and visions for this church, our neighborhood, our children, our friends, ourselves, and the global village. We can be the embodiment of the Christian Lesson in Acts 2:17-18 that reads "that in the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams." All it takes is faithfulness to studying GOD'S WORD, passionate belief in God's Son - THE CHRIST, and Holy Spirit empowerment of you - GOD'S PEOPLE.
>
> "Before accepting the call to Mayflower, OCTOBER 1, 1993, I read your proposal on revisioning, studied your church profile, and asked God for a vision for THE 21ST CENTURY. Your church profile expresses concern for the spiritual and financial management of the church. During the next three years you are hoping to develop a sound stewardship program, increase the membership, the church's participation and support for Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM), and develop a strong church school, Bible Study, and youth program. The following STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATIONAL PORTION OF THE VISION, is also based on your church profile, revisioning process, and current constitution:
>
> LOCAL CHURCH STRUCTURE
>
> "But now there are many members, but one body."
>
> JESUS CHRIST
> Pastor
> Moderator — Church Council
> Pastoral Relations Committee
>
> CONGREGATION
>
> Christian Education, Diaconate, Trustee Board, Other Boards, Committees, Groups, and Programmatic Ministries

In the local church, the Office of the Pastor is of extreme importance. THE PASTOR IS MORE THAN AN EMPLOYEE OF THE CHURCH. The Office of the Pastor is one of Spiritual Leadership, Staff Executive Officer, and Authorized Administrative Head of church activities.

"**The Church Council is the Administrative Arm** of the Church. Its Senior Officer is the Moderator, the highest elected office in the church. Matters of concern to the congregation, pastor, and boards should be addressed to the Moderator and the Church Council when the church is not in session. The Moderator appoints boards and committees to assist the Pastor and the church; for example, the Pastoral Relations Committee.

"**The Diaconate is the Spiritual Arm** of the Church and assists the Pastor in the spiritual matters of the church. These include serving communion, visiting the sick and confined persons of the church, assisting in funerals, baptisms, assimilation of new members, lenten, advent, and special services; and participating in community projects that build public relations and assist the hungry, the naked, and those in prison.

"**The Religious Education Board is the Educational Arm** of the church. This Board supervises the Church School, chooses the Church School Superintendent, and, with the minister, outlines and carries into effect a religious education plan, including the Church Library. Technically, there is some overlap with the Diaconate in that the two boards work together on the Lenten and Advent Services as well as Mid Week Services and the planning and implementation of an early Sunday service.

"**The Trustee Board is the Financial Arm** of the church. This Board, and the Pastor, closely care for the financial and physical welfare of the church; advises the Pastor and the church of receipts and disbursements of all funds of the church (except Memorial and Scholarship Funds); acts in all matters determined by Act No. 53 of Public Acts of Michigan for 1901 and the amendments.

"**The Mission Education and Social Action (MESA) Board** is the link to the wider community. With the Pastor, MESA seeks to awaken the local church to the larger social, political, and cultural issues that affect our lives and the United Church of Christ at home and abroad.

"There is certainly more activity involved in the work of each of the five major boards of the church than there is room to express in one Annual Report, but the basics are provided for your information and implementation. When you consider accepting the responsibility of working in the church, you have accepted an awesome opportunity to revision, reclaim, renew, and revive the work of the Body of Christ and its members at Mayflower.

"Officers, leaders, and elected officials are expected to enter their respective Office of Service reverently, sincerely, and humbly. When it comes to matters of the church, we must pray without ceasing, out do one another in honor, and seek first the Kingdom of heaven in all our doing and being.

"THE FOLLOWING SPIRITUAL PORTION OF THE VISION IS ABBREVIATED AND BASED ON THE CHURCH PROFILE, THE REVISIONING PROCESS, MAYFLOWER'S CONSTITUTION, AND THE WORD OF GOD:

"A CHRIST-CENTERED CHURCH - An organized church without the King of Kings as the Cornerstone, is just another organization where people are attempting to control and have their own way. Unlike the Federal, State, and Local Government and its agencies, the Church must regard Jesus as the central figure - the head of the Church.

"A HOLY SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH - Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, aliveness, and energy. We must be free to receive and release the power of the Holy Spirit in our worship experience. The personal expressions of the gathered community as well as the witness of the same community in scattered places should look similar. For example, if you are an expressive person, feel free to express yourself. If you are a quiet person, feel free to express yourself quietly.

"A PRAYING CHURCH - Proverbs commands us "in all your ways acknowledge God. And God will direct your path". Prayer is our most important and most powerful resource. A Praying Church understands that it cannot do nor be anything that God would have it do and be without heaven's mercy and help.

"A FASTING CHURCH - Sometimes, prayer alone is insufficient. While conferring with God on most matters will assure direction on our journey, there are overpowering issues, concerns, and matters that require

overpowering behavior to overcome. The Word says "some things only come through fasting". Hebrew and Christian examples of fasting are sparsely sprinkled through out the Holy Writ, but the results of their fasting are powerfully aligned with the intervening Spirit of God.

"A WORSHIPPING, CELEBRATING CHURCH - The primary activity of the church is the ministry of worship and celebration. We gather at designated times to give God thanks and praise for all that God has done, is doing, and will do in our lives. We assemble to be reminded of God's Word that grants strength, a framework for holistic living, and that beckons us towards the Kingdom of God.

"A TEACHING, BIBLICALLY LITERATE CHURCH - The principal ministry of Jesus Christ and the early apostles was that of teaching. The call to Christian discipleship is a summons to learn the mysteries of the ways of God, to study how God has acted and continues to act to bring about God's truth, justice, righteousness, and peace throughout creation. A Bible Based Church is not a church that subscribes to biblical literalism. It is a church that takes seriously the systematic study of the history and literature of the Scriptures as the "inspired Word of God". It is a church that acknowledges and affirms that the Bible is the priority guidebook for the formation of belief and behavior of Christians.

"A LOVING, SHARING, CARING CHURCH - In other words, a love-centered church. Anyone whose life is touched by the church should be able to describe the touch as coming from a people who care and a people who are concerned about their neighbor. A love-centered church is hospitable, compassionate, and warm.

"A GROWING CHURCH - The primary mission of the local church is that of evangelism, inviting people to worship, inviting people to personal faith in Jesus Christ, inviting people to full membership, and inviting people to a life of discipleship in the world. This is Christ's commandment: "Go into **all** the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; **teaching** them to observe all that I [Christ] have commanded you, and lo, I am with you, even to the close of the age." Proactive, intentional engagement in the ministry of evangelism and membership growth is obligatory because it is what our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, has commissioned the church to do.

"A TITHING CHURCH - The normative biblical standard for membership giving in the community of faith is the tithe, or "ten percent" of what one has in time, talent, and treasure. It is rooted in the Judaic law concerning acknowledging that God is the Giver of every gift through returning to God in thankfulness 1/10 of the produce of one's labors. This suggests that giving of who one is and what one has is not a matter of offering to God what is left over from one's other engagements, but the "first fruits" of one's blessings.

"A POLITICALLY AWARE AND SOCIALLY ACTIVE CHURCH - There is no separation between the "sacred and the secular" and the spiritual and political realities of mortal existence. ALL OF LIFE IS ONE. While we are creatures who strive for that "city not made with human hands", we are also very much citizens of a particular society often marked by that which is in contradiction to the will and ways of the God we serve. Therefore, the church must be engaged in the struggles for peace with justice and social transformation.

"A PROGRESSIVE/CHRIST-AFRICAN CENTERED CHURCH - This means Jesus Christ is the reason for our being. Glorifying God and building Christ's Kingdom is the focus of our worship, our work, and our wishes. The church should resist the temptation to become comfortable, complacent, and conformist about its achievements as a people of God. We seek the "cutting edge" in our service of God and people. What does God call us to be in this place among this people at this time and in the days that are yet to unfold? This is the prevailing question. New vistas for ministry will need to be explored. These could include broadcasting, creative mission partnerships with other UCC African American churches and national instrumentalities, historically related UCC colleges and universities, and UCC Boards, Committees, and Centers.

"This is just a glimpse of what the Lord has in store for Mayflower. We have By-Laws to revisit; we have the sick and confined with us and they must be visited; there are those in love who will want your Pastor to marry them; there are those in trouble who will want your Pastor to counsel; there are those who will die and we will be asked to funeralize them; there is a wider church and community and a global village to serve; there is a facility to be managed and people to be directed if the church is to be what God is calling the church to be - ONE.

> THIS IS THE SAME GOD WHO ASKED SOLOMON IN A DREAM "ASK WHAT I THE LORD SHOULD GIVE YOU." AND SOLOMON ANSWERED "YOUR SERVANT IS IN THE MIDST OF THE PEOPLE WHOM YOU HAVE CHOSEN, A GREAT PEOPLE; GIVE ME, THEREFORE, WISDOM - AN UNDERSTANDING MIND TO GOVERN YOUR PEOPLE, ABLE TO DISCERN BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL."

So it is written - so let it be...

...in Christ."

The congregational responses to the above annual report was received by the majority. Those who rejected it aggressively opposed the Pastor as the representative of Christ as head of the church. Their perception of Pastor was one of employee of the church.

If this Annual Report had not been demanded within 30 days of my arrival, there may have been an unfortunate loss or long term delay in policy changes and program emphasis. The Report, nonetheless, set the tone for our church constituency, our community, and our country. We intend to lead the way of the age of the Spirit.

Another way policy changes and program emphases have been influenced is by providing a publication written by the pastor and printed in the weekly bulletin. This is also a way of keeping the congregation informed about community issues, political challenges, theological reflections, health questions, and congregational musings from spiritual perspectives. An example of such a publication is provided in Appendix B.

A third way of changing policy and program emphasis is

by revisioning the church constitution and bylaws; restructuring the office staff duties and responsibilities; and offering a variety of ministries to address the needs of the community. During the first eight months of 1994, a Constitution and Bylaws Committee and the Pastor worked through the necessary changes in the Bylaws and presented to the church a document that, if passed, would change the way we do business. It passed. Without a lapse in time, the Pastor restructured the office staff duties and responsibilities, introduced a new Bible Study Class, brought in a Head Start program; founded the Community Alternative Resource Experience (C.A.R.E.); emphasized Christ/African centeredness; and built relationships within and among willing supporters of the vision as articulated in the 1994 Vision Statement.

Relationship -- neither religion nor ritual alone -- is the most important piece of Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth as it relates to policy changes and program emphasis. Going into a situation that has had eleven years to do it's own thing for lack of full time, permanent leadership requires faith (Imani), prayer, patience, and, yes, politics. Not only to influence change within the corporate body; but also within individual members who make up the body.

It is said if you keep on doing what you do, you'll keep on getting what you got. The pivotal point for

spiritual transformation and rebirth as a corporate entity or as an individual is, according to Romans 12:2, by renewing the way you think. Ephesians 4:23-24 reads "'now your attitudes and thoughts must all be changing for the better. Yes, you must be a new and different person, holy and good. Clothe yourself with this new nature."

The only thing constant is change. Stereotypically, women are accused of constantly changing their minds. Neither Romans 12:2 nor Ephesians 4:23-24 are gender specific. If you want to change what happens to and for you, you must change the way you think. As you change the way you think, you not only change the way you act, but also the way people around you think and act. The result of practicing change and discussing alternative worship styles, ministries, community involvement opportunities, and programs, yields changes in policy development and program emphasis.

In fine, the church's policy to be politically oriented has changed to being prayerful and spiritually correct. These changes continue to take place gradually and consistently because the leadership is encouraged and referenced through God's taught, preached, written, and practiced Word.

Adjacent responses to policy changes and program emphasis include building consensus and agreeing on proposed policies and programs versus moving from a proposed change

to a vote; suspending the traditional formalities for joining church, and allowing the unchurched to serve as 'in-training' participants in peripheral or non elected church activities; inviting the community to use the church facility without imposing non-refundable fees; hosting ecumenical events; and keeping the vision before the congregation.

Prophets, prophetesses, priests, and preachers need to be as political as the inspired, historical and contemporary individuals -- Moses, Deborah, Jesus, Phoebe, Mary McCloud Bethune, W.E.B. Du Bois, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Patricia Roberts Harris, Prathia Wynn Hall, Cornel West, Cecilia Bryant, Molefi Asante, Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., inclusively. By the same token, each of these individuals are favored for their spiritual impact on politics, history, education, and religion. As the church goes -- seeking first God's Kingdom, truth, and life within -- so goes the government.

What's in a Name?

A significant part of the spiritual transformation and rebirth process requires setting time aside for intentional prayer, reflection, and meditation on God's Word and other liberating inspirationals. Disciplined prayer, reflection, and meditation bring about heightened awareness to Spiritualness and health-filled, spiritual presence over a period of time. Following intentional entrance into

spiritual transformation and rebirth processes in February of 1979, my spirit (God's breath) has progressed from ignoring and misinterpreting to comprehending, evaluating and applying spiritual revelations.

While meditating on Friday, December 15, 1995, my spirit visualized a time in my dad's life when he made a credit card purchase and signed his name "X". As the scene unfolded, Dad, after signing "X", was told that he would have to sign his name. Unable to do so, I was allowed to sign for him. Interestingly enough, I made his signature 'X Ernest Anderson'. Later in the same morning, I wondered if I was dreaming or remembering an incident that occurred during my childhood. I called my oldest sister who explained to me that daddy's slave name was Hub Vonner. Eventually, dad ran away from the Vonner Plantation and went to Atlanta, Georgia. As a young man seeking employment, he went to work for a Greek Restaurant Owner. The Greek informed him that Hub was not a name and renamed dad Ernestos Anderson. Somewhere along the line someone informed Dad that Ernestos was a Greek name and suggested that he use the American version - Ernest.

In recent years, I have introduced myself to student bodies who invite me to speak on issues from the African perspective as follows: "My slave name is Pamela June Vonner, my American name is Pamela June Anderson, and my African name is Pamela June X. During the first 30 years of

my life, people called me and taught me to call myself Pam. When I spoke with my family about my desire to be called Pamela and my intention to change my last name to Vonner, the swell of opinions overwhelmingly opposed the concept. While my family concedes to calling me Pamela, the name Vonner continues to conjure up conflicting emotions within the family -- including fears about acknowledging and identifying with our African heritage, African American history, the African Holocaust (slavery), lost family members, and family members who fled from the south to save their lives.

A name is more than just a name -- it is an identification with its meaning and descriptive of its characteristics. If naming was an insignificant happenstance, changing names would be possible without the emotional stirring that occurs when naming or renaming is the issue.

Bearing in mind that the focal point of MY CHURCH MY SELF is one of spiritual transformation and rebirth from the Christ/African perspective, renaming the church to reflect current constituency has heightened the congregation's level of awareness about 'who' and 'Whose' they really are. Similar to familial responses, local church members are also fearful about taking on a name that identifies them with their true spiritual or ethnic selves.

Sterling Stuckey, author of Slave Culture gives a long

expose on this issue that bears repeating in a short form as follows:

> "in affirming white values, [Negros] tried to shed their African roots...the term African more often than not reflected a pride in blackness and racial inclusiveness rather than color and class distinctions...those who put the word African in the titles of churches and other organizations, unless from slave communities, were not likely to understand the meaning..."[18]

Fear of 'who' many African Americans are is an awesome burden. So much so that Stuckey's chapter entitled "Identity and Ideology: The Names Controversy" refers to a time when Blacks turned their backs on institutions with the word African in their title. The strife over naming seesawed among Black leadership bearing shame for who they were and Black leadership bearing pride in who they were. The first wanting to forget they were African, the second nurturing their Africanness.

Stuckey records a stark contrast between ex-slaves who conferred European names on their children -- even though African names were available -- and ex-slaves who abandoned European names for African names. George Garnet and Isabella X are the better examples. George Garnet, son of a native African warrior, renamed his wife (Hennie) Elizabeth; and named his son Henry Highland Garnet -- an abolitionist who advanced an African conception of freedom.

On the other hand, Isabella abandoned her European name

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[18]Stuckey, Sterling, SLAVE CULTURE (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 198-199.

for the name Sojourner Truth. She had left the house of bondage and subsequently prayed for and received from the Lord a name that identified how and what her life was about -- travelling (Sojourner) and declaring (Truth).

Into the 19th Century, naming ceremonies, a tradition linked to Africa, grew out of a sense of loss and oppression peculiar to African descendants living in America. Names constituted the Africans' essence. Naming was of such importance that those who participated in it believed themselves to be connected to the African soul and souls of ancestors. Publicly, African and pet names were used deceptively in the presence of whites to conceal information.

By the time of Frederick Douglass, the term people of color was used to distinguish African descendants from white people. Douglass also purported that people of color must direct their own liberation. Booker T. Washington contended, after the coming of freedom, that "there were two points upon which all the people were agreed...**they must change their names** and they must leave the old plantations..."

Persons opposed to name changes supported extreme views. By the late 19th Century, according to Stuckey, the Reverend A. Johnson of Cincinnati, Ohio, wanted the initial 'A' in denominational titles retained to represent 'American.'

> "The former [African] reminds us of being slaves and chattel; the latter reminds us of freedom and true manhood. [Note the denial regarding 'who' Africans are and the exclusion of women. i.e., manhood vis-a-vis person.] The former reminds us of being outcasts in American politics, the latter reminds us of being American citizens, incorporated in the body politic of this great republic."[19]

'Afro-American' became one of five complexional designations by the 1890's. The other four were African, free African, colored, and Negro. To this Stuckey quotes an African Methodist Episcopal Church official, Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner: "Who is the European but the man from Europe. So too the Asiatic. So we, being from Africa, regarded ourselves as African."[20]

By 1904, it was concluded that more than a name change was needed to combat the evils of racism. While this sounds ever so familiar (the church needs more than a name change), the concern for the majority of members in favor of a name change also represents people with a higher level of consciousness among blacks who favor the term African-Americans. In the late 1980's African-American was used to reference a people of African ancestry to the land, history, and culture of their forebears, while recognizing their presence as an unassimilated people in America.

Equally important to the name controversy and the

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[19]Stuckey, Sterling, "Slave Culture," chap. in NAMES CONTROVERSY (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 135.

[20]Stuckey, Sterling, SLAVE CULTURE (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 241.

significance of naming are Asante and Stewart, authors of The Book of African Names and African Names respectively. Both authors have listed in their books African male and female names accompanied by their meanings in English. Along with Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr. added during a lecture series in March of 1994, that "there is no such thing as a Negro. Negro is a misnomer, created by the oppressor. Further, Negro is neither national, geographical, nor does it denote a nation."[21]

These pieces from lectures and literature are greatly relevant to a people who, after joining a predominantly European denomination (United Church of Christ) and local church (Mayflower Congregational) are engaged in the names controversy in 1995. Again, to reflect a single people -- none of whom traversed to the Americas on the Mayflower Ship as welcomed passengers -- many members of the ethnic community continue to sacrifice their African values for that of another. Even the value Africans place on naming.

During the name controversy at The Church on the Hill two cliches have repeatedly emerged. One is 'it's not what they call us, it's what we answer to.' What people call you has meaning, whether you answer or not. Nigger is not a name, but African slaves and descendants of African slaves were not only called nigger, they came to answer to it and

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[21]The Reverend Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., Peer Seminar lecture, Chicago, Illinois, March, 1994.

associated with the meaning and intent of its connotation.

The other cliche is 'a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.' There are flowers that smell as sweet as a rose, but the point of the name -- rose -- is not one of odor as much as one of identification. In addition to flowers that smell as sweet as a rose, there are people who have the name Rose, and there is the Rose of Sharon; each distinguished by its own identification. As with flowers, locations, and people, so it is with ships. The name distinguishes the identifying marks of the named.

The name Mayflower is unquestionably identified with a ship that carried the first 102 Pilgrims from Plymouth, England and settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620. This sentence alone should inform a congregation of African Americans of the need to change the name that so identifies them. If not, then surely the first agreement among the Pilgrims to be self-governed should be cause for a new identification. No one is an island unto himself or herself. This is a contradiction to what God calls people to be - a people in community, not an autonomous people.

Further, the Pilgrim leaders convinced 41 <u>male</u> adults aboard the Mayflower to sign the Mayflower Compact and, therefore, set up a government named the Plymouth Colony. William Bradford, the second governor of Plymouth Plantation (interchangeable term for colony), wrote the Mayflower Compact and acknowledged that the purpose of the Mayflower

voyage was to set up the first colony to the glory of their sovereign Lord, King James of Great Britain, France, and Ireland. The signers of the Mayflower Compact solemnly swore to

> "combine ourselves together into a Civill body politick; for our better ordering, & preservation & furtherance of ye ends aforesaid; and by vertue hereof to enacte, constitute, and frame such just & equall Lawes, ordinances, Accts, constitutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall bea thought most meete & convenient for ye generall good of ye colonie: unto which we promise all due submission and obedience."[22]

In a phrase, the signers of The Mayflower Compact agreed to preserve and further the European understanding of the Christian faith in honor of their king and country.

The name Mayflower is so endearing to European Americans that:

> "the Governors of Plimoth Plantation, Incorporated, of Plymouth, Massachusetts, asked William A. Baker, a naval architect, to prepare plans and specifications for a New Mayflower and reenactment of the original Mayflower passage of the Pilgrims. The Plantation, a non-profit educational foundation organized in 1947, dramatizes the Pilgrim story for modern Americans. It has as its ultimate goal a reconstruction of the entire Pilgrim village."[23]

By contrast, the proposed name change for the church, L'Amistad Congregational United Church of Christ, identifies with a people whose passage, persons, and purpose speak volumes to the importance of freedom from the ethos of the Mayflower.

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[22]Baker, William A., "The Mayflower and Other Colonial Vessels," (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1983), p. 24.

[23]Ibid., p. 25.

In 1992, I first heard about L'Amistad (also known as La Amistad and Amistad), during the United Black Christians Convocation. The United Black Christians is an organization within the United Church of Christ that was formed to address the issues of unordained members of the people of color in general, and African Americans in particular. The United Black Christians meets bi-annually and attempts to gather in cities where there are traditionally Black institutions of higher learning. In 1992, the United Black Christians met in New Orleans, La., the home of The Amistad Institute.

The stories of the Amistad are as diverse as the people who learn and participate in the oral tradition, telling their account of this saga to fix the desperate struggle for freedom raised by a few Black Africans against powerful people and the governments of Spain and the United States. In commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Amistad event, The Board for Homeland Ministries produced a videotape, booklet, and study guided entitled I REMEMBER THE AMISTAD. It is a twenty-minute production that chronicles the history of The Amistad, the formation of the American Missionary Association which is now a division of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. During African American History Month, The Church on the Hill distributes the brochure describing the Amistad event. The Church on the Hill also has a poster of Sengbe strategically placed in

the most frequented entrance, and is in the process of circulating the video. The video portrays familiar persons within The United Church of Christ sharing their remembrance of L'Amistad. Dr. Shelby Rooks, immediate past Executive Director of the United Church of Christ Board for Homeland Ministries remembers the Amistad as

> "the nearly forgotten story of a small slave ship that caused an important moment in history...The Amistad event concerns God's vision of love, justice, and human figures in the world. This vision is the mission of the United Church of Christ..."[24]

The Reverend Barbara Jean Essex, now a private consultant in Dolton, Illinois, produced the study guide booklet which includes a section entitled THE AMISTAD INCIDENT. It reads as follows:

> "By 1839, slavery had been outlawed by Spain. Yet thousands of African women, men, and children were being abducted and sold into slavery. Such was the case from April to May on the western shores of Africa. In 1839, one of the thousands captured was a handsome man named Sengbe from a Mendi village. He was called Cinque by his Spanish captors. He was among the 500 to 600 Africans sold by Pedro Blanco, the infamous slave factory owner on the island of Lomboko, south of Sierra Leone. The newly enslaved Africans were held on the island of Lomboko until their Portuguese buyer transported them to Havana, Cuba aboard the Tecora. This slave ship was designed to transport hundreds of Africans to the Americas. Their journey, called the "Middle Passage" was quite difficult. They were separated from family and friends. They were chained and shackled together to prevent their escape. Their clothing was taken away and they were allowed to take no possessions with them. They were crowded into every inch of space available, packed-in as if they were sardines. Often, the Africans were forced to crouch because there was no room to lie down or stretch out.

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[24]I Remember The Amistad (New York: Board for Homeland Ministries, 1989), Video.

There were no toilet facilities, and they were forced to live in their wastes for the duration of the voyage. Many became seasick and fell victim to a variety of diseases and ailments. When one died, he was unshackled and thrown overboard. Those who were able, escaped by jumping into the sea, preferring death to slavery. The captives were often beaten and subjected to humiliating treatment by their captors.

When the Tecora arrived in Havana, the Africans were moved to a holding area called a barracoon where they waited to be purchased by other Spaniards. Jose Ruiz bought forty-nine men including Sengbe. Pedro Montes bought three little girls and one little boy. The African captives were boarded onto the American-made schooner named La Amistad, the spanish translation for friendship. The schooner set sail for Guanaja with a final destination to nearby Puerto Principe, Cuba, about three days away.

The Amistad set sail on June 28 with the captives and crew: Ramon Ferrer, owner and captain; his two slaves, Antonio the cabin boy and Celestino the cook; Jacinto Verdagne and Vicente, both of whom served as stewards and guards; Ruiz and Montes. The ship was loaded with precious cargo and staples. The ship encountered high winds and the trip took longer than expected.

Through various means of scanty communications, the Africans were led to believe that they were to be boiled and eaten by their white captors. On the third night, Sengbe and his cohorts staged a revolt. Ferrer and Celestino were killed. Ferrer managed to kill two of the mutineers; Montes was wounded. Ruiz and Antonio were spared and the other two crew members escaped on a small boat and reached Havana.

Through Antonion, Sengbe was able to communicate the wishes of the Africans to Ruiz and Montes: sail east into the rising sun towards Africa. The men did sail east by day, but at night they sailed north and west. Montes followed this zigzagged course from July to August 26 when the Amistad was captured by the United States brig the Washington under the command of Thomas R. Gedney. The Africans were captured near Culloden Point off Long Island.

Supplies were soon exhausted. Scant food and water supplies were obtained from passing ships and islands. The Africans were hungry, fatigued, and ill. Eight of them died before they were captured by Gedney.

When Gedney tried to take control of the Amistad, Sengbe attempted to escape; he was determined that his people would not be enslaved. Death was more desirable than slavery. He encouraged the others to choose death. Their attempts were futile, and the schooner was towed to New London, Connecticut on August 27, 1839.

Gedney then sent a message to the United States Marshall at New Haven that the long, low zigzagging schooner was now in custody. The Marshall and the United States District Judge, Andrew T. Judson, were there to greet the captives.

Unknowingly, Sengbe and his companions were destined for a frustrating time. Their arrival in the United States occurred at a time when great tumult was brewing. The antislavery movement was in an uproar as the abolitionists sought agreement around political tactics, women's rights, the nature and scope of American politics, and the role of the churches in the antislavery movement. In addition, the appearance of the Africans brought to the fore the ambiguities of international relationships among England, Spain, and the United States.

Judson presided over the hearing to decide the status of the Africans. After studying the evidence and listening to Ruiz and Montes, he committed Sengbe and his 38 companions to the next session of the United States Circuit Court at Hartford. The Africans were charged with murder and mutiny. They were detained as witnesses and sent to a jail in New Haven.

Ruiz and Montes wanted the Africans, the ship, and its remaining cargo handed over to the Spanish counsel in Boston. Meanwhile, Gedney and his first mate, Richard Meade, laid claim to the Amistad and its cargo. The abolitionists were convinced that Sengbe and the other Africans were innocent of the charges. They argued that the Africans acted in self-defense and were justified in their actions to obtain freedom. However, the abolitionists knew that a strong defense was needed in order to exonerate the Africans.

The stage was set for collective efforts on the part of the Amistad sympathizers. Their compassion was stirred by the moral and legal implications of the situation. They set out to find someone who would serve as translator so the Africans could speak for themselves.

Joshua Leavitt, Simeon S. Joceyln, and Lewis Tappan formed a committee in New York City in early September. They made a national appeal for financial assistance to provide legal and other help for the hapless Africans. Their appeal was based on the premise that the Africans were illegally kidnapped and sold into slavery. The defense team was composed of Roger Sherman Baldwin of Connecticut, and Seth P. Staples and Theodore Sedgwich of New York. They were convinced that the defense would be stronger if the Africans could tell their story.

On September 6, Lewis Tappan introduced John Ferry to the Africans. Ferry, a native of the Kissi tribe, was able to talk with the Mendi Africans. He was able to translate enough to assure the abolitionists that the Africans had been kidnapped and sold into slavery in Cuba.

The trial opened on September 17 with Smith Thompson presiding. Seth P. Staples asked that the little girls be released from jail since they had not been charged with a crime. They were not released.

The United States District Attorney, Williams S. Holabird, asked the court to turn the whole matter over to President Martin Van Buren who would determine whether the Africans should be given over to Spain or returned to Africa. On the fourth day of the trial, Thompson ruled that if crimes were committed, the United States Circuit Court had no jurisdiction over the charges of murder and mutiny on board a Spanish ship in Spanish territory. The matter of the ship's cargo was to be decided separately.

All of the captives were returned to jail including the children. Another interpreter was sought. A Yale professor, Josiah Willard Gibbs, found one in New York. He met James Covey who was working on the British warship, Buzzard. Covey had been rescued from slavery by the British patrol. Gibbs obtained permission to take Covey with him to New Haven to communicate with the Mendi captives.

The New York Amistad Committee was busy providing for the captives. They asked The Reverend Leonard Bacon, the Reverend Henry G. Ludlow, and Mr. Amos Townsend, Jr., to form a group to teach the Africans English and religion.

In the midst of this activity, the Spanish minister, Angel Calderson de La Barca, requested that

the Amistad, the captives and the ship's cargo be returned to Cuba. This was not done and the wheels of justice continued to turn.

In late October, 1839, the abolitionists filed a complaint on behalf of the Africans. Ruiz and Montes were arrested and charged with assault, kidnapping, and false imprisonment. Montes was released on bail and Ruiz chose to stay in jail assuming he would garner sympathy. The case against the Africans opened in the United States District Court at Hartford on November 19 and was postponed until January, 1840.

The Spaniards continued their push to reclaim the schooner and the captives. At the same time, Britain was pressuring Spain to prosecute Ruiz and Montes for illegal slave trading. The pro-slavery government officials established a contingency plan in case the Africans were freed. If necessary, the Africans were to be smuggled on board a waiting ship and taken to Havana. District Attorney, William S. Holabird, was ordered to set this up by Secretary of State John Forsyth under the direction of President Van Buren. Thompson heard the testimonies and examined the evidence and rendered his decision on January 13. His decisions included 1) The United States Court had jurisdiction since the incident occurred on the high seas; 2) Gedney and his crew were entitled to receive one-third of the apprised value of the Amistad and cargo; the rest was to be returned to the Spanish government; 3) Gedney and company were to receive no compensation for the Africans since they had no value as property according to Connecticut law; 4) Antonio was to be returned to his rightful Cuban owners; 5) The Africans were neither slaves nor Spanish subjects; they were free persons.

In view of this surprise decision, Holabird filed an appeal. The Africans were taken back to jail.

When the appeal opened in the Circuit Court in April, 1840, Thompson ruled that a decision could be made by the Supreme Court only. A court date was set for January 1841. All during this time, the Africans were held in prison. Their days were spent learning English, work skills, and Christianity. They tried to understand the intricacies of American justice. They simply wanted to go home and did not understand why it was taking so long. Sengbe did what he could to encourage the others. One of the captives, Foone, was overwhelmed by their long sojourn. It is believed that he drowned himself despite his excellent swimming

skills. The Africans slowly learned to trust their white friends and hoped that justice would prevail.

Lewis Tappan and others knew that they needed strong, dynamic counsel for the Supreme Court. Tappan, along with Ellis Gray Loring, a famous Massachusetts lawyer, visited former President John Quincy Adams. They hoped that Adams would speak on behalf of the Africans. Adams was an opponent of slavery but not an abolitionist. He had expressed interest in and sympathy for the Amistad Africans. He was hesitant to accept the challenge because of his advanced age and because he had not argued a case before the Supreme Court in over thirty years. Finally, he consented and set about his work with great energy. For various reasons, the case was delayed until February 20, 1841.

Henry D. Gilpin, the new United States Attorney General, opened the case by arguing that the United States had no right to usurp the power of Spain. The matter should be turned over to Spain. Baldwin opened for the defense. His argument was that the Africans had been declared free by the lower court and that that decision should be upheld.

John Quincy Adams spoke on February 24 even though he felt ill-prepared to do so. His argument focused on the interference of the Executive Office in matters of justice. He encouraged the Court to deal with the evidence only and not be swayed by the emotions of the Executive Office. If the Court would review the evidence, the verdict was clear: the Africans are free. Adams spoke for hours with passion and eloquence.

The Supreme Court decision was handed down on March 9, 1841. The Africans were declared free; they were kidnapped persons entitled to return to their native land. They were discharged immediately and the abolitionists were elated. Lewis Tappan and Roger Baldwin went to Westville, Connecticut, to share the good news with the now free captives. The Mendi Africans were overjoyed at receiving their long-awaited freedom.

However, their story does not end here. For many months more, they remained upon foreign shores. The Amistad Committee needed time to raise money to send them home. In addition, the Committee wanted to establish a mission station in Mendi country.

Since their first steps aboard the Amistad, seventeen of the Africans had died. They had spent

over two years in jail where they were mistreated and exploited by the jailkeepers. In their freedom, they were still on display. The abolitionists took them to churches and public meetings where they recited Bible verses and told their story. In this way, they helped to raise the money to send them home.

At long last, enough money was raised to send the surviving thirty-nine Africans home along with several missionaries, including a Black couple. On November 27, 1841, the group was boarded onto the Gentleman which took them to Freetown in Sierra Leone. Before the mission station was established, most of the Africans had returned to their native homes and customs. Sengbe, the leader who never lost sight of freedom for the captives, also returned to his native home and customs. Some years later, he moved to the mission station established by the Americans. There he died in 1879.

While the Africans obtained their freedom, the Supreme Court decision did not abolish slavery. The Africans received neither apology nor restitution for the pain suffered during their two-year captivity.

In the years following, the Amistad incident continued to press the United States Congress on a number of occasions, debating whether reparations were owed to Portugal for the loss to the slave owners "property." This debate consequently heightened the slave-as-property issue.

The case, however, did set into motion a collective movement that led to the formation of the American Missionary Association. The A.M.A. was the largest organized abolitionist association in the United States prior to the Civil War. The A.M.A. worked diligently among American Indians, West Indians, Blacks, Appalachian whites, and immigrant groups. The A.M.A. started and developed antislavery churches in the North and South. The Association started schools and academies to educate the newly freed slaves. Several of these institutions remain to this day as testimonies to the commitment of the abolitionists sparked by Sengbe and his desire for freedom. Talladega College, Fisk University, LaMoyne-Owen College, Dillard University, Tougaloo College, and Huston-Tillotson College stand as witness to the power of a few to make a difference. Today the American Missionary Association is incorporated into the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. Through the United Church Board of Homeland Ministries, work

> continues among the disadvantaged because of this early vision of justice for all.[25]

Garnet cites Joseph Cinque's heroics on the Amistad in emancipating a shipload of Africans and had at his becking, Africans who could acquaint him with first hand African background and African attitudes to correlate the will for freedom from slavery to the African ethos to live free, self defined, self-determined, and self-named.

In all of history and, for the sake of inclusive language 'herstory', the resounding theme in life, in love, and in the pursuit of liberty is 'give us free.' Whether the subject is one of abolitionism, spirituality, politics, Eurocentricity, African centeredness, family values, or basic survival needs, the base line desire of men and women, boys and girls is to be free. The second important desire of humankind is to experience immortality. People accomplish eternal life by a number of means including giving birth to a Nation (Lucy, Abraham, Hagar, Islam); establishing perpetual scholarships and endowments (Rockefeller, Benjamin E. Mays, Lilly, Kellogg); building institutions and naming them after Carnegie, Ford, Bethune, J. F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr.; organizing and naming churches lifting up Richard Allen, Pilgrims, ships, locations, colonialists, and mission; constructing memorials

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[25]Barbara Jean Essex, "The Amistad Incident," in I Remember The Amistad Study Guide, The Board for Homeland Ministries (New York: United Church Press, 1989), 8-13.

and naming them after U. S. Presidents, artists, musicians, politicians, physicians, preachers, and educators; and then there are contemporary legends in the making. In each of these cases, the person or persons with a vision names the vision out of a particular heritage, history, and hope.

The United Church of Christ is so named to project a vision for an inclusive, peacefilled, uniting, socially just, environmentally correct, evangelistically oriented, and spiritually transforming, multi-cultural/multi-racial family of God. Since its inception in 1957, the United Church of Christ has been in the forefront fighting for freedom. Freedom from slavery, freedom from exclusivity, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom from oppression, freedom from sin, etc.

New church starts, revisioned churches, and growing churches identifying with the vision of the United Church of Christ and participating in spiritual transformation and rebirth processes are also changing identifications. Some are voting to eliminate the tradition in the church name and many are changing their church name to a name that reflects the vision of the constituency. The story and name L'Amistad captures the vision and the mission of a church for freedom, justice, and salvation for all.

In and Out House Views and an Interview

With the support and at the suggestion of onsite advisor Dr. Robert O. Bland, I called a meeting with the

congregation to begin discussions on Christ/African Centered Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth as it relates to naming and changing the name of the church. This first meeting took place on January 16, 1995, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, birthday. Approximately 30 persons attended and expressed a variety of views regarding the church name change, ranging from the embarrassment they have weathered worshipping at a Black church with a European name -- to them rejection that they have experienced from Black persons who will not visit or join because of the contradictions between the name of the church and the constituency -- to the name is nothing but a name.

The Contextual Associates assisted in developing two surveys. Both surveys were designed with the purpose of determining individuals' knowledge of personal history, church history, and denominational history, inclusively. Juxtaposed against fifteen (15) out of thirty (30) who responded to the survey entitled QUESTIONS FOR CHANGE AGENTS, only one out of thirty (30) individuals responded to the following survey:

Survey Questions Presented to Church Members
Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ
MLK, Jr. Birthday - 16 January 1995

1. Do you know what your personal name means and its origin? For example, my surname is Anderson. I do not know what it means but I do know that my paternal grandmother's slave name was Vorner and she married an Anderson.

My maiden name is Indian

2. Do you know the importance of names in the African culture? Yes X No

3. Do you know the importance of names in the Biblical culture? Yes X No

4. How are names chosen in families?

From meaning of name.

5. How much do you know about the colonization period?

Some

6. What do you know about chattel slavery?

7. How many Blacks were allowed in the Congregational Church in Plymouth, Mass., in 1620? 0

8. What is the Amistad? A slave ship

9. How did the American Missionary Association become involved in the Amistad? ?

10. What is the American Missionary Association today?

?

11. Why did the (now) United Church of Christ become involved in the Amistad? ?

12. Who were the two principle persons' involved in the Amistad case? Cinque and John Q. Adams

13. How do you feel about the church name Mayflower?

Needs to reflect the membership and community

14. If the name of our church is changed to Mayflower - L'Amistad how will it give you a greater sense of mission and planning for growth as we move into the 21st Century?

_____

_____

15. What can the church do to help you feel knowledgeable and comfortable with explaining the name change to your family and friends?

_____

_____

These question were developed based on the Revisioning Process of the church and designed to collect information about the participants level of knowledge regarding naming and identity.

Other surveys that follow, were used to measure the congregations receptivity to changing the name of the church, heighten awareness and acceptance of Christ/African centered spiritual transformation and rebirth, and to explain how holding onto the Eurocentric name is a way of denying our African centered heritage. The answer to these question were used to assess the members' knowledge about African centered heritage. Overall, the motivation for using surveys is to attain knowledge of our culture, acknowledgement of our heritage, appreciation for the African self, and clarity of the mission of the church as it regards establishing a new identity. The ultimate expectation of the focused project is changing the name of the church.

QUESTIONS FOR CHANGE AGENTS
Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ
16 January 1995

1. If you are married, did you take on your husband's name?

Yes 12 No

If 'yes' how did you adjust to taking on your new name?

- It was proper and I had no problem with it.
- Uncertain
- Fine
- Fine
- At the time it was common or the custom for persons (females) to take on their husbands name. So I thought nothing about it at all.
- I used my maiden - married.
- No difference.
- No problem - just happy.
- Based on tradition and upbringing, I was expected to adjust quickly and accept my new name. Which I did.
- Very well
- With great pride because I love my husband.
- I acted as a wife and not as a single available lady.

2. If you could rename yourself, what would you call yourself and what does it mean?

- Righteous, truth, love: to be intuned with what God would have me do.
- Uncertain
- I do not wish to change my name.
- No.

- I would keep my maiden name.
- Jamelia - means beautiful one.
- Would not consider changing.
- No desire to change my name - it's been very good for me.
- I have no desire to change my name, it is my attitude and behavior, I want to change.
- No because the person who named me were my god parents + uncle + aunt.
- I would not re-name myself. My personality, my inner self is me.
- I would not change my name. My reputation which is my behavior, attitude and the essence of who I am.

3. Does name change require rebirth?

- History has proven that through change, one changes everything, it is a complete rebirth.
- Most definitely.
- No written response.
- No.
- No.
- Yes.
- No.
- No.
- Yes.
- Rebirth can take positive or negative turns.
- No. Requires re-setting goals.
- Somewhat.

The process of transformation (change) is:

(1) Looking at things as they are;

(2) Looking at what you want to be;

(3) Looking at the behavior that keeps you where you are; and

(4) Looking at behavior that gets you where you want to be.

In the Bible, God changed people's names to reflect a change in perspective, direction, and attitude.

Persons in Biblical History whose names were changed by the dominant culture are recorded in Esther 2:7 and Daniel 1:6,7:

> "And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother..."

The second reference reads:

> "Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, Shadrach; and to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego".

Three examples of Biblical characters whose names were changed by God are recorded in Genesis 17:5, 15, and 32:28, respectively.

> What's more," God told him, "I am changing your name. It is no longer 'Abram' ('Exalted Father'), but 'Abraham'..."
>
> Then God added, "Regarding Sarai your wife - her name is no longer 'Sarai' but 'Sarah' ('Princess'). And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and make her the mother of nations! Many kings shall be among your posterity."
>
> "What is your name?" the Man asked. "Jacob," was the reply. "It isn't anymore!" the Man told him. "It is Israel - one who has power with God."

The one individual who changed his own name is Saul of

Tarsus. The transition becomes evident with Saul's encounter with the Lord near Damascus (Acts 9:3-6). The first reference to him as "Saul, (who also is called Paul,)" is in Acts 13:9. There is no mention of God changing his name; however, Paul's changing of his own name indicates his change in perspective. Perhaps the community referred to him as Saul-Paul. But his new perspective called for an outward sign of an inward reality. That is to say, it is the stated opinion of some that Saul did not have a conversion experience but an immediate evolution of perspective -- from oppressing God's people to opening God's people up to a new reality -- freedom in Christ. When Saul's perspective about God's people changed from persecuting God's people to promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he manifested this change in perspective by changing his name to Paul.

There are also broad invitations from Jesus Christ to all of humanity to enter into the process of change. The Matthean litany "You have heard it said...but I say", is one example of change as a process. Another example is found in John 3:1-21. Jesus is in dialogue with Nicodemus, a master religious teacher of Israel, about a new perspective. Jesus not only acknowledges the important role Nicodemus exhibited in his belief (religion), but also the momentous need to have Someone to believe in (relationship).

Other process oriented Scriptures reflect upon persons

going through change and making decisions about change. Just the mere fact that we go from the Old Testament to the New Testament is a part of the big umbrella of change. In the Nicodemus story, the answer Jesus gave him was a process answer. You cannot stay as you are, you must change. If you do change, you can be a child of God.

On a much broader scale, there is the systemic challenge associated with the process of the exodus. When Moses went to Pharaoh and said 'thus says the Lord, let my people go', Pharaoh replied "who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." (Exodus 5:2).

The Age of the Pharaohs created a political, economic, and social system exclusive of and insensitive to the culturally and spiritually based systems of Israel. Comparatively, Mayflower Congregationalism is tantamount to the leadership of Rameses's day (Exodus 12:37); where as the people of L'Amistad are analogous to the people of color in the second millennium.

Similarly, Psalms 137:4 raises this question from God's people "how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? The people of God sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept as they remembered Zion - the homeland. They were commanded to work out a way to worship. Verse 3 says "For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of

the songs of Zion."

African Americans in diaspora are a people in a strange land, trying to sing home songs, trying to reach back to the Mother Land for identity, insight, spiritualism, and survival techniques while in foreign residence. This, too, is a form of being born again.

The name change of the church gives direct identity to the people who were brought out of Egypt, out of Exile, out of bondage, and out of slavery. **Maintaining a Eurocentric name helps us forget this great thing God has done for us.**

God's people reached Canaan after forty years in the wilderness. Canaan was industrialized, so to speak. Yet God strongly advised Israel to avoid mingling, ministering, and marrying the people of Canaan. Israel was to keep their own religion, their own God, and their own culture. Instead, they forgot what God had done for them.

The African American church represents a people standing on the shoulders of Ancestry. All over the United States, post-modern, African centered leadership is reaching back to Africa in search for identity, insight, spiritualism, and survival techniques.

The responses are chronologically correlated. That is to say, each persons response is matched at questions 1, 2, and 3. The person who responded (1) "I use my maiden-married," (2) Jamelia - means beautiful one," and (3) "yes"

expresses an openness to consider change to a greater degree than the person who responded (1) "no problem - just happy," (2) no desire to change my name - it's been very good for me," and (3) "no" to the question "does name change require rebirth?"

From the onset, the gathered community took three basic positions on the issue of transformation (change): supportive, resistant, undecided but considering.

Following several months of Christ/African, Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth centered preaching, teaching, small group discussions, and program emphasis, Contextual Associates and onsite Advisors and I developed and provided an in-house survey to the worshipping community. Three weeks before placing the Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth Survey in the church bulletin, I sent a letter to the church membership asking the church to participate in the survey for three Sundays in succession.

The following is the actual survey and the responses:

TRANSFORMATION AND REBIRTH SURVEY
(August/September 1995)

To some, Mayflower means:

"I grew up here"

"I buried my spouse here"

"I married my children here"

"Demise of the Native Americans"

"Slavery, Slave Holders, and Colonialism"

"Puritans and Pilgrims"

"Furniture Movers"

What do you think about when you think Mayflower?

Of the following names that have been suggested, some speak of God and some speak of God's people. What do you think about:

Agape Congregational (Love) 3

Burning Spear Congregational 1

Faith Congregational (Imani) 10

Judson King Congregational 1

L'Amistad Congregational (We be free) 7

Peace Congregational (Amani) 6

Peoples Congregational 1

Sojourner Truth Congregational 0

W.E.B. Du Bois Congregational 0

After taking into consideration your own experiences with God, searching the Scriptures, and praying, what spiritual and/or Biblical name has God given to you?_____

[There were only two new write ins: Christ and Peoples. One person, "after taking into consideration their own experiences with God, searching the Scriptures, and praying for a spiritual and/or Biblical name" wrote 'none;' three wrote 'no change;" and six wrote the name Mayflower; and four wrote 'keep it the same.']

WHY CHANGE? Spiritual Institutions should identify with Spiritual things. We are the body of Christ without a Spiritual name. What we call our church tells the community, the country, and the cosmos 'who' and 'Whose' we are.

Please take a break, fill out this Survey, and mail it to our church, attention: Dr. Marjorie Harris.

Thank you for your participation.

(RESULTS WILL BE AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 5).

A total of 49 persons responded. Two of the respondents were visitors and one was a duplicate. The two visitors so identified themselves and the one duplicate was determined by comparing hand writing. Of the remaining 46 considered, 30 supported a name change.

What follows is a transcription of verbal responses to changing the name of the church from five different groups of people. The largest group was 30 and the smallest group was seven. The total number of verbal respondents were 70 and included ten of our youth. Supportive responses for changing the name of the church were:

1. The founding name is not about Christ or me.
2. The current name belongs to the people who founded the church. They are no longer here.
3. I am ashamed of being called by a slave name.
4. Our past makes us what we are today. Our current name honors the founders not ourselves or Christ.
5. I like names I hear in school. Some of my classmates have names I can relate to, but not the church.
6. I can't vote for the change, but if I could, I would. I like being who I am, but the church name makes me ashamed.
7. We have a national holiday named after Martin Luther King, Jr., but until I become of age, I have to worship at a church named by somebody else.
8. I don't think the adults are really interested in the future here, only the past. Mayflower is no where.
9. When I first heard the lay person say we needed to change our name I was furious. But now I accept and understand the need for changing the church

name. It would finally give us ownership and we can stop living somebody else's dream.

10. When I grow up, I will go to another church. A church where everything points to Jesus.

11. The name tells me nothing about God or a safe place I can be.

Written responses from the All Church Survey were:

1. Mayflower represents (or is a constant reminder) of what we have overcome.

2. It was the name that I joined this church the other people gave us. If it bothered me then I would have gone to Oak Grove or Hartford where people go by the hundreds.

3. We already have a spiritual name in our church, 'U.C.C. United Church of Christ'

4. Puritans, indentured servants, history that does not reflect mine.

5. We be free (L'Amistad).

6. The need for freedom from the image that the name Mayflower suggests.

7. A group of people who built a church and then abandoned it because of racism.

8. The first flowers of spring.

9. The puritans, colonialism, oppression, pilgrims, white people.

10. Western civilization where we are programmed to trust and love everything but ourselves.

11. What we need a lot of Imani (faith).

The top three All Church Survey results by recommended name change in numerical order was:

IMANI CONGREGATIONAL (10)

L'AMISTAD CONGREGATIONAL (7)

AMANI CONGREGATIONAL (6)

On September 10, 1995, an onsite advisor reported the result of the Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth Survey and the report was received by majority vote. A Contextual Associate motioned to change the name of the church. The motion was supported but failed in the voting.

The motion failed in the voting for three reasons:

1. The Pastor was physically incapacitated and unable to participate in the process.

2. The vote was based on a public versus private ballot.

3. The top three choices were presented in lieu of one choice.

Though the public vote fell short of carrying the motion, the Model has successfully and positively influenced the majority of the church. So much so that members are increasingly sensitive to and supportive of the Christ/African centered spin on programs, naming group projects, and intentionally hosting Christ/African centered community gatherings. During the month of December, for example, the church hosted the first annual Spirited Victory Convocation -- an ecumenical gathering for women in ministry; presented the Mandinka Warriors and the Umoja Youth Christmas Brunch to the church on the third Sunday (52 young people under 20); invited The Association For The Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC) to celebrate Kwaanza with the Mandinka Warriors; and dedicated THE IMANI HALL portraying all participating moderators and full time pastors of the church since 1931.

During the first week in October, three Contextual Associates assisted in developing a Community Transformation and Rebirth Survey. A total of 300 Community Transformation and Rebirth Surveys were distributed in the immediate neighborhood by the Umoja Youth Group.

Thirty-one (31) persons responded before the 1 November deadline. Twenty (20) additional responses were received after 1 November but were not included in the tabulation. The reason for excluding the responses was simply a matter of respecting a time line. At least two family members of the church received The Community Transformation and Rebirth Survey. It is not known whether they are among the respondents or, if they did respond, it is not known whether they answered differently or similarly in relationship to the Churchwide Transformation and Rebirth Survey.

With the assistance of two other Contextual Associates, The Community Transformation and Rebirth Surveys returned by the November 1, were tabulated by November 3. The accompanying cover letter, survey, and results are located in APPENDIX H and represent a broader-based support for outreach ministry.

In the late 1970's, The Reverend Henry T. Simmons named one of the choirs The Amistad Chorale. Suspecting that the pastor's intent was to also rename the church, I met with Reverend Simmons in October of 1995 and recorded the former pastor's statement on the church name change issue. A

transcription of his statement entitled "Identification and Identity" is located in Appendix C.[26]

A final discussion with the Contextual Associates during the 1996 African American History month resulted in selecting one of three names for the new church name. Based on the August Church Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth Survey, the selections are (1) Imani Congregational United Church of Christ, (2) L'Amistad Congregational United Church of Christ, and (3) Amani Congregational United Church of Christ. Although Imani, which is Swahili for faith, has the largest rating, L'Amistad is a more familiar name in the local and national church and also has a greater historical value and relevancy.

At The Church on the Hill one of the choirs is named Amistad and the hunger project is named L'Amistad Brown Bag. As The Church on the Hill and visiting community frequent THE IMANI HALL, consideration between L'Amistad and Imani may become competitive name issues.

The question emerged as to whether there are Biblical ships named in the Holy Bible. This inquiry suggests a desire to stay within the genre of sea vessels. Perhaps this desire has to do with the Negro Spiritual 'Tis The Old Ship of Zion.' This Negro Spiritual is a song performed in such classics as Cabin in the Sky; a song used when

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[26]The Reverend Henry T. Simmons, interview by author, Tape Recording, St. Albans, New York, 7 October 1995.

preachers open the doors of the church; a song referenced as a safe haven when the storms of life are raging; and a song of comfort during times of bereavement. On the other hand, the spiritual 'Steal Away' is about a sea vessel named Jesus that was operated by slave traders' passage.

In the postmodern era, naming boats and ships is associated with military vessels and commercial cruisers. Mariners often name their vessels out of their personal history or heritage. In the Bible, however, the characters or the purpose associated with the ship or boat are the defining entities.

Biblical Scriptures associated with ships and boats dramatically unfold God's purpose in the lives of African men and women such as Noah (Genesis 6:13-22), Jonah (Jonah 1:3-5), Solomon (I Kings 9:26), the Queen of Sheba (I Kings 10:11), Jehoshaphat (I Kings 22:48-49); Eliezer (II Chronicles 20:37); David (Psalms 107:23); Jesus (Matthew 4:21-22; 14:13-33); and Paul (Acts 21:2 - 27:44; 28:11). After sharing this information with inquiring minds, the response was one of reconsideration for the name L'Amistad. The membership continues to use the motto, which increases the impact of the name change. Former resisters are speaking positively about changing the church name, and the majority of the membership and persons affiliating with the congregation are also intentionally participating in the Christ/African Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth process

and expressing individual and group desires to participate in community outreach ministries, church growth, and 'insperiences.'

RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

The results of the surveys provide a measurable progression. At the first meeting to discuss a name change, fifteen person out of 30 completed the survey and returned it. Between the time of this January 16, 1995, meeting and the Churchwide Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth survey in August of the same year, Contextual Associates and participants in subsequent gatherings discussing the name change resulted in forty-nine (49) persons responding. The church has progressed to consciously participating in the Christ/African centered spiritual transformation and rebirth journey; using Christ/African names for projects, events, and new ministries; and reviewing the video THE AMISTAD EVENT.

At this time in the spiritual transformation and rebirth process, it is my personal preference to rename the church Amani (Swahili for peace) or Imani (Swahili for faith). Beginning with the latter, it is by the Author and Finisher of Imani that we have come this far. On the other hand, it is time for Amani. Both Imani and Amani are more closely identified with Christ/African centered spirituality.

L'Amistad, however, has been identified as a name that would complement the United Church of Christ's history, heritage, and hope for an inclusive, just, peaceful, and uniting people of faith. All three names are more closely

related to a people involved in a mission for freedom, justice, and salvation then the name Mayflower.

At Divinely appointed times, we reflect our Christ/African Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth in the name of our church. Members are referring to Mayflower less frequently and often with apology or, at least, with a conscious understanding that Mayflower is out of alignment with the vision and direction of the current constituency.

Because of the intense focus on Christ/African centeredness, The Church on the Hill is growing in spirit, numbers, and giving; and in the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding of 'who' and 'whose' we are.

Spiritual transformation and rebirth takes time, practice, patience, and prayer. In the words of one Contextual Associate "spiritual emphasis is new to us." In the affirmations of many others, there are clear indications that persons intimately involved in the life of the church, regular visitors, and intermittent, long term visitors are acknowledging and commenting on the positive improvements in the spiritual atmosphere and the African centered presence in the church, the mission, the ministry, and the members.

Until the church name change comes to a vote, we are on a journey that is new to the contextual church. And the journey is one of personal, collective, and ultimately community-wide spiritual transformation and rebirth.

The consciousness of the contextual church is rising at

a greater rate than at any other time in Her African American history. Likewise, the resistance of the contextual church is lowering in matters of Christ/African centered sensitivities. There is a stronger element of anticipation and affirmation for Christ/African centered preaching, programs, and people participating in and attracted to The Church on the Hill where prayer is changing people and people are changing things.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A - "What Does It Mean to be an African Descendant Living in America" by Ramon Scott

"The African-American male has been labeled as dangerous, obsolete, endangered, and at risk. Much of who the African American is has been externally determined by the circumstances of our western existence - white male supremacy.

"When Susan Smith ran her car into the river in South Carolina several months ago, she stated that an African-American male had forced her out of her car and kidnapped her two young sons. Many people believed her right away. Several African-American men in the area were arrested and suspected of being the kidnapper, while many others were called demeaning names by whites who lived in the area. The attack was upon every African-American male.

"When six African-American young men were at the Fairlane Mall together, they were stopped by police officers and told that they could not walk around in a group that large. The officers said there was a law in Dearborn, Michigan prohibiting six people from walking around together in the shopping mall. Of course, no such law is recorded, and groups of six walking around in malls is not an unusual site. They simply thought that these African-American young men were up to no good. They must be looking to cause trouble.

"When many African-American men approach whites, and

especially white women, they clutch their purses against their bodies, rush to their cars, cross to the opposite side of the street, or freeze right in their tracks. Their mind have been so programmed that they believe every single African-American male wants to rob them, assault them, or even rape them.

"This very eleven o'clock hour on Sunday morning throughout America, the most segregated settings one can find will be in churches. We literally see a separation of whites and blacks in the neighborhoods, in the churches, at social gatherings, and in many other places. Is this by design? Yes, I think so. I should hope that some of the Christian Americans who make distinctions based on the color of one's skin won't be too disappointed when they enter into the gates of heaven to be greeted by a Messiah whose Biblical description states Him to have hair as course as wool and feet as golden as brass. Wool and brass are not commonly associated with whiteness. Will they still want to enter into His Kingdom? Something to think about, isn't it?

"And what about the well-known O.J. Simpson double murder charge? All polls show that an overwhelming majority of whites already believe that he is guilty, and many think that way simply because he is African-American and should not have been married to a white woman in the first place. I wonder if America would have taken the same position had he been charged with killing his first wife who is Black?

Would the case be aired on television? Would the law on the side of the people pursue the case just as aggressively? Would America in general be as enraged about the brutal slaying of an African-American woman? I don't think so...

"Why is it that so many people have these negative views of the African-American male and of African-Americans in general? It is because the weakness of the African-American community has resulted in an exploited population of children, women, and elders. The irony of such a situation is that the African-American male is a victim and also a victimizer. Males are in conflict with themselves, other males, their mates, and children. Many African-American males are more interested in name brand clothing, sports, and having babies than anything else. It is very nice when one makes the professional ball teams or lands a good career in the entertainment business. But that only happens to one person out of every 10,000. That is where the importance of education comes in.

"We recently had a wonderful trip to historical Black colleges and universities in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. We saw colleges that had been founded by our ancestors who had a thirst to learn to read and write, learn skills and receive training in law, medicine, education, agriculture and religion. These schools came about because African-Americans were not welcome to attend white institutions of learning. Whites thought that

African-Americans could remain enslaved if they were not educated, keep them dumb and you won't have to worry!

"Another gimmick has come about during my generation that has enslaved many African-Americans, and especially the males. It is called drugs. Young Black boys as young as nine years of age are dealing drugs. They have been shown a way to earn a fast dollar by selling marijuana, crack, cocaine, heroin, and other illegal substances right in the communities in which they live. Those who have become addicted to these drugs often steal from their own parents and neighbors to support their habits. They have dropped out of school at an alarmingly high rate. They have lost respect for themselves, their family members, their communities, and their God. It is said that more young African-American men of college age are in jail than in school or in the work place.

"The drug market has brought about a violent society in the African-American community, fighting, killing, using obscene language, being disrespectful to adults, and showing no respect for the property of others has become commonplace. Young Blacks who have dropped out of school are unable to read and write. They blame others for their miserable failures in life. Many in my generation will not surpass the educational attainment of their own parents or grandparents. How sad it is for our ancestors to have paved the way for us to receive a quality education and yet so

many of us are rejecting that opportunity.

"So where do I fit into the puzzle? I am a thirteen year old African-American male descendant living in a wicked and troublesome society. But I am a product of a family heritage that can be traced back five generations on both my mother's and my father's side. Part of my ancestors lived in the beautiful Caribbean Islands of Cuba, Jamaica, and Barbados.

"I am well aware of much of the breakdown among African-Americans around me, but I am instructed by loving parents not to become a part of anything that will harm and not help me. What would I do at thirteen years of age if I dropped out of school? Steal, sell drugs, walk the streets at all hours of the night, break in neighbors houses, resort to drugs and violence? That's not the road I intend to follow. I want to be a positive role model in my home, my church, my school, and in my community. I want to conduct myself in such a way that some of the misconceptions people have about all African-American males can be corrected. I attend school regularly, as a matter of fact, I always receive perfect attendance awards. I have not missed a single day of school for the past three years. I have been named **Student of the Month** this year, and my grades have been 3.00 or better each marking period. In addition to keeping up with my school work, I have read fifteen books during this school year. I participate in basketball and

softball at Gesu School. I participate in Sunday School and church activities, for I know that without God I can do nothing but with Him I can do all things.

APPENDIX B - Heavenly Hints/Earthly Events
2 DECEMBER 1995

This week, the William Tyndale College asked me to share my perspective on ministry. I took the occasion to revisit my profile as presented to the our National Church and Michigan Conference. Even though particularities require adaptations from time to time, it is basically my call to ministry as interpreted by experiencing and 'insperiencing' God.

In essence, personal ministry is fulfilling God's agenda as can best be interpreted through Scripture, church and human history, and personal experience/insperience. Corporate ministry lives out God's agenda through a covenantal relationship with God. Both personal and corporate ministry are Godly when used to persuade people to accept a new, life-long changing process - from being strangers with Christ, to being friends with Christ.

Like a caterpillar's transformation to a butterfly, people inch along this freedom journey being transformed by the renewing power of God's Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, and inspirational literature.
When you take on living the Good News, spiritual perfection and the ministry of reconciliation (re-establishing our relationship with God) is possible. God's Word on this is "even as sinners we are reconciled to God through Christ's death...and the great love with which we have been loved."

African theology supports all God fearing believers as ministers -living in love with God, neighbor, and self. When we turn aside from this greatest commandment and act out of our own self-filled nature, we turn toward environmental, social, ethnic, and economic injustice and violence.

Ministry is also a life-style made up of three major disciplines: prayer, Biblical meditation and literary exploration, and Imani (Faith). Of the three, we cannot please God without Imani.

Scripture does not describe, enjoin, or place great significance on modern rites of Ordination. Ancient leaders answering God's call to the office of the Prophet, Priest, and/or Preacher, were accepted as the leader and spokesperson of the community. The community sanctioned his or her authority by 'anointing' the head of the individual with oil or the 'laying on of hands.'

It is this that makes the prophet, priest, and/or preacher <u>different</u> from other church, community, or government members, leaders, and officials.

In the 80's, worldly citizens displaced Godly authority in homes (parental), communities (prayer), and churches (pastoral). When you displace Godly authority, you displace God. And without God, who directs your life? "Without God we are a nation, divisible, under, without liberty, and just-us."

APPENDIX C - "Identification and Identity"
by The Reverend Henry T. Simmons

"At a local church meeting on the issue of changing the name of the subject church, an eight year old boy said "Why not call it God's Family Church?" The gathered community thought it sounded emotionally good. As they continued through the process of changing the name of their church, the church discovered that the new name did absolutely nothing for the church's identity.

Around the same time, the Branch Dividian situation heightened the sensitivity of the church regarding it becoming a sect. And the name "God's Family" conjured up an unsettling; and they changed the name of the church to The Spirit of the Lake, because they were forced to think about it, then to be emotional about it.

God's Family sounded like a closed thing, a cult. If this is God's Family does that mean others are not of God's Family? The same can be said about names like Mayflower or congregational - it does not include others.

The archives of the church will not change with a name change. It is a fact in history that descendants of the Mayflower so named the church. The congregational polity means that the congregation is vested with its decision making power. That's why no one can tell the congregation who to call as its pastor. The congregation can decide on its literature, worship style, etc.

New communities are created everyday. Fifty years ago there was no Sun City, Arizona. But somebody lived out there. Does that mean that whatever occurred isn't history for that geographic location? Yankton College is a UCC related college that closed. Does that nullify all the degrees that alumni of Yankton have? No. It means that from that point, no one else will have a degree from Yankton. When ministers of the church change does it nullify the work of previous ministers? No.

The question becomes 'who are we today?' What has our life together revealed to us in terms of 'who we are.' Italian Americans can make a reference to Italy. Irish Americans to Ireland, Greek Americans to Greece, French Americans to France, etc., etc., etc. There is no place called Black land, Negro land, Darkie land, Colored land. There is Africa. It's an identification issue.

Can you trace your roots back to Plymouth or Mayflower? No. You can trace your spiritual roots back to a spiritual heritage that shrouds L'Amistad off the coast of Cuba. It

is the spirit of freedom and consciousness.

If the name of the church cannot evoke that spirit for a people who have a different place in the story of the community, then it is not that significant.

Help people understand that how they are identified by others is an entre into sharing their identification - who and whose they are. Ask the community what Mayflower or congregationalism means? Basically, people are drawn to a church based on how it touches their lives today. The faith story in action is of interest. Make the gospel relevant in every day life.

Sixty-five years ago when the Mayflower Congregational Church was formed, there were no people of African descent that lived in the neighborhood or in attendance at that church. When it was organized, the vast majority of African people in this country did not have the guaranteed right to vote because of Jim Crow and Poll Taxes in the deep South. Sixty-five years ago there were no people of African descent on the Supreme Court of this country or in either of the two houses of Congress. Thirty seven (37) years after the church was formed, Lyndon Johnson appointed Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court. Sixty-five years ago, no major city in this country was served by an African American elected mayor.

Even the recent history has not included us. Since the 60's, the contributions of African Americans have been recognized. So the name change in terms of both identity and identification is about a positive claim -- not a negative reactionary statement -- this is who we are.

In 1957 when the United Church of Christ formed, this denomination had over 2,000,000 members. By 1995, thirty eight years later, it has less than 1.5 million members. The mainline protestant denominations in this country use to have significant influence on the fabric of this country -- economically, politically, socially. Today they do not have it.

Sixty five years ago, denominational claims meant something to people who were looking for churches because our society perceives itself to be much more protestant and religious. Today we're dealing with people who are largely unchurched. Some of them are children, but most of them are grandchildren of individuals who dropped out of the church, who have little sense of the faith in general and even less of denominational affiliation in particular.

If the task or mission is to continue God's efforts to

redeem and reconcile the world to God's own self -- evangelism helps children recover a sense of what it means to be nurtured and reared in the Christian faith -- you have to address them in ways that meet their particular need.

People are looking for 'community' to help them answer or probe and wrestle with the abiding questions of life; help them make sense of what's happening to values and principals.

Changing the name of the church is less a matter of making a political statement as it is a bold, positive step to lay claims on what is true and resonates with the souls who are removed from a name that we often referred to 'in the good ole days.'

Time earns a lot of things - credibility. Church votes are often a referendum on the pastor. People want to see how the Pastor is going to react. Is this Pastor going to stand? Or is this Pastor as leader going to go the direction of the wind? People want to see where you're going to stand and how you will stand.

One of the things that is often overlooked when we hear the story of the remarkable transformation of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, is that Trinity has always been named Trinity. There is nothing particularly Afro-Centric about Trinity or about the United Church of Christ. Why is it, therefore, that the name United Church of Christ is a major barrier to membership church growth?

Because many confuse identification with identity, what Jeremiah A. Wright did was to create an identity 'Unashamed Black/Unapologetically Christian.' This is the understanding of this church. Its name, in this case, does not make the difference. The quality of the service gets the attention.

In the case of Mayflower, however, changing the name of the church will put a label on what it is that the church can do and is doing by the power of God's Holy Spirit in the lives of people. Create the identity along side with creating the identification.

What changed St. Albans Congregational Church was how we approach being the church. Historically, we had been uncaring and unwelcoming of people of African descent. As we moved to an uncaring society to people in general, we try to be a high-touch-church community in a high-tech age.

You have to work as hard on identity as you do on identification. The name change will help to cement the

identity of the church but its ultimate purpose is that of identification. I think, therefore, that you (1) talk about the purpose of <u>any</u> name. In order for people say a particular flower evokes a particular response, feeling, or reality, you say 'this is a rose.' You don't say 'this is a rose' lets look for a flower that looks like a rose. (2) If the answer to number one is identification, survey those who are yet to come and see if it resonates with the community. For example, ask the community 'what does congregational mean to you?' (3) During African American History month deal with the richness of our legacy. The purpose for which is to lay a positive claim on our place in what is, admittedly, a marvelous story. We're not trying to separating from the Congregational part of the United Church of Christ, we're trying to say this is where we fit and this is what we bring - not what we received. To use the Mayflower is to exclusively place African Americans in a position of being the recipients of something. If we were not there, if it was not our initiative, then it becomes a heritage given to us. Mayflower is about a receiving of history.

L'Amistad is about a seizing, a making of history. What we will bring to the denomination, what we will bring to this expression of the church. L'Amistad is about a galvanizing of a people in a struggle against a systemic evil - racism. It galvanized men and women of the congregational church to intellectually see that slavery was wrong. But it took the initiative of those enslaved to galvanize them. The people of the American Missionary Association and its predecessor body who were Congregationalist and Presbyterian, were stirred to action and responded to the action of African people. Had Sengbe not revolted, there would have been no cause for folks to address the issue. So we bring to an admittedly rich religious heritage a gift that when Sengbe says "give us free" he's not just talking about the Africans, he's talking about all who trade in and have any involvement in this heinous evil of slavery. So those white New Englanders were sensitive to be more faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

So we need to say to our children and to ourselves that we are not relying upon what others in a predominately white denomination do for us, but what we bring. Therefore, a name change strengthens us in our own self-perception, in our own ability to participate as full partners in the life and ministry of our wider denomination.

L'Amistad would be a reawakening, a restirring of the commitment of Christians to act upon the tenants of the faith, in that we still have racism. What's facing our people are the invisible shadows -- redlining and miseducation, for example. The 21st Century will not find

an ethnic majority, quantitatively speaking. We celebrate all other gifts God's people bring.

What is this about the Spirit of L'Amistad?: (1) We are not second class. We helped build this country and the congregational church. (2) Self-determination - reliance upon powers beyond the human race. (3) Victory, not victimization, reconciling among people to achieve the common goal of the eradication of an evil. (4) Courage, compassion, confidence, and commitment is the Spirit of L'Amistad and the Church."

APPENDIX D - WHAT'S IN A NAME
By The Reverend G. Wesley Raney

Text: Matthew 1: 18-21

18. NOW THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST TOOK PLACE IN THIS WAY. WHEN HIS MOTHER MARY HAD BEEN BETROTHED TO JOSEPH, BEFORE THEY CAME TOGETHER SHE WAS FOUND TO BE WITH CHILD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT;

19. AND HER HUSBAND JOSEPH, BEING A JUST MAN AND UNWILLING TO PUT HER TO SHAME, RESOLVED TO DIVORCE HER QUIETLY.

20. BUT AS HE CONSIDERED THIS, BEHOLD, AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO HIM IN A DREAM, SAYING, "JOSEPH, SON OF DAVID, DO NOT FEAR TO TAKE MARY YOUR WIFE, FOR THAT WHICH IS CONCEIVED IN HER IS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT;

21. SHE WILL BEAR A SON, AND YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS, FOR HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS."

"IN BIBLICAL TIMES, BOTH OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT, A NAME DID MORE THAN JUST IDENTIFYING A PERSON. A NAME COMMUNICATED SOMETHING SPECIAL, SOMETHING OF THE ESSENCE, THE CHARACTER, AND THE REPUTATION OF THE PERSON OR THING NAMED. A NAME WAS OFFERED AS A MEMORIAL OF SOME CIRCUMSTANCE CONNECTED EITHER WITH BIRTH OR A DESCRIPTION OF A CHILD'S APPEARANCE AT BIRTH, OR THE EXPRESSIONS OF THE HOPES THE PARENTS HAD FOR THE CHILD AS IT GROW UP INTO ADULTHOOD.

"THE NAME JESUS WAS NOT A NEW NAME. IT WAS NOT A NAME COINED ESPECIALLY IN THE COURTS OF HEAVEN FOR THIS PARTICULAR CHILD. IN FACT THE NAME OF JESUS WAS VERY COMMON IN THAT TIME. THE NAME JESUS WAS THE GREEK VERSION OF THE NAME JOSHUA. BOTH JOSHUA AND JESUS ARE THE VERY SAME NAME. ONE IS HEBREW, THE LANGUAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE OTHER IS GREEK, THE LANGUAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

"ACTUALLY, IF YOU WANT TO BE SPECIFIC AND TECHNICAL, THE NAME JESUS IN HEBREW IS REALLY PRONOUNCED YESHUA MEANING 'JEHOVAH IS SALVATION OR THE LORD IS SALVATION'. THAT'S WHAT JESUS MEANS.

"THE FIRST TIME WE COME ACROSS THE NAME 'JESUS' IS IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS, CHAPTER 13 VERSE 16. THERE IT SAYS THESE ARE THE NAMES OF MEN MOSES SENT TO EXPLORE THE PROMISE LAND. MOSES GAVE HOSEA, SON OF NUN THE NAME JOSHUA. JESUS AND JOSHUA ARE EXACTLY THE SAME NAME.

"THE FIRST JOSHUA, THE SON OF NUN. I HAVE TO SAY 'N U N' BECAUSE I HAD A MEMBER IN ANOTHER CHURCH ONE TIME WHO LISTENED TO A TAPE. YOU KNOW THAT THE BIBLE COMES ON TAPE THESE DAYS. AND SHE CAME ACROSS WHERE IT SAYS 'JOSHUA THE SON OF NUN' AND SHE WAS LISTENING TO NUN AS NONE. AND SHE SAID 'DOES IT MEAN HE HAD NO MOTHER OR FATHER?' I SAID 'OH NO. READ IT FOR YOURSELF AND YOU'LL DISCOVER THAT IT READS NUN.

"THIS FIRST JOSHUA, COMMANDED SHEEP OF THE LORD'S KEEPER, UNDER WHOM THEY COUNTED THEIR INHERITANCE, THE LEADER WHO BROUGHT THEM OUT OF THE DESERT TO THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY; JOSHUA THE CAPTAIN WHO LED THEM TO VICTORY, THOSE THERE WERE MANY FOES; JOSHUA, A STRONG LEADER AND RULER WHO SET EVERY FAMILY IN THE PRECISE POSITION GOD HAD CALLED FORTH...THIS JOSHUA WAS THE FIRST TO BEAR THE NAME 'JESUS'.

"IN TIME THIS JOSHUA DIED AND FOR CENTURY'S THERE WAS

NO PARTICULAR PERSON OF STATURE CALLED JOSHUA OR JESUS. IN TIME THE PEOPLE LOST THE LAND THAT JOSHUA HAD WENT OUT TO EXPLORE WITH THE OTHER ELEVEN SPIES. THEY WERE HELD CAPTIVE IN BABYLON. AND THEN AFTER FORTY MISERABLE YEARS IN CAPTIVITY, THE SECOND JESUS CAME ALONG. HIS NAME WAS CALLED JESHUA, THE SAME AS JOSHUA OR JESUS.

"JESHUA WAS A HIGH PRIEST WHO LED THE PEOPLE BACK TO THE LAND AFTER CAPTIVITY THAT THEY HAD LOST BECAUSE OF THEIR SIN. "IF YOU DON'T WATCH OUT, SIN WILL MAKE YOU LOSE SOMETHING VERY PRECIOUS.

THIS JESHUA REBUILT THE TEMPLE AND RESTORED A PLACE OF WORSHIP FOR GOD. JESHUA WHO WAS CROWNED WITH GOLD BY THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH, IS A TYPE AND FORERUNNER OF THE MESSIAH, THE GREATER HIGH PRIEST. THIS JESHUA, THE SON OF JEHOSAPHAT, WAS THE SECOND JESUS IN HISTORY.

IN SENDING GOD'S CHILD INTO THE WORLD, GOD DID NOT LEAVE THE SELECTION OF HIS NAME TO CHANCE. THE ANGEL DECLARED 'YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS BECAUSE HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.'

WITH THE NAME JESUS, PIOUS JEWS OF THE KIND WITH THE GREAT CAPTAIN WHO DROVE OUT THE CANAANITES FROM THE LAND 'YOU SHALL CALL HIM AFTER THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST WHO BROUGHT THE PEOPLE BACK FROM OUT OF BONDAGE, YOU SHALL ALSO BE A SAVIOR. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

THERE IS SOMETHING IN A NAME. IT STANDS FOR THE THING. AND THROUGH FREQUENT USE, IT COMES TO BE IDENTIFIED WITH

THAT WHICH IS NAMED. IT IS THEREFORE IMPORTANT THAT THE NAME SHOULD MEASURE UP TO THE THING OF WHICH CONVEYS THE CORRECT IDEA OF IT.

IN THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS, THAT'S GENESIS, GOD GAVE ADAM THE JOB OF NAMING ALL OF THE ANIMALS. AFTER DOING SO, THAT WAS THE NAME OF IT. THE NAME WHICH HE GAVE DESCRIBING THESE BEASTS AS HE SAW THEM, WERE TAKEN FROM SOMETHING IN THE ANIMAL'S APPEARANCE, WAYS, OR HABITS OF THAT ANIMAL. EACH NAME EXPRESSED ITS NATURE AND ITS KIND. IF IT WAS REASONABLE TO GIVE NAMES FULL OF MEANING TO DUMB ANIMALS, MUCH MORE TO PERSONS. FOR EACH PERSON HAS A CHARACTER DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHERS. A CALLING DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHERS.

THE SECOND THING I WANT TO SAY ABOUT NAMES IS THAT NAMES HAVE POWER. IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE IT, JUST CALL SOMEBODY BY THE WRONG NAME. YOU'LL FIND OUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A BAD NAME EITHER. JUST CALL SOMEONE BY THE WRONG LAST NAME. SOMETIMES FOLKS WILL FIGHT OVER NAMES.

YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS. OUT OF ALL THE NAMES BY WHICH MEN ARE CALLED TODAY, WHAT NAME IS THERE APPROPRIATE AS THE NAME JESUS.

THE NAME JESUS HAS LIVED THROUGH ANARCHY AND REVOLUTION, THROUGH STORM AND CHANGE; THROUGH DECAY AND DEATH. OTHER NAMES SINCE THEN, AND MANY OF THEM CARRIED AS GREAT NAMES BY THE WORLD; MANY HELD IN AWE BY THE WORLD, WITH GRAND ACHIEVEMENTS AND MADE MEN TREMBLE, HAVE PASSED ON

INTO OBLIVION. BUT THE PRECIOUS NAME OF JESUS IS AS GREAT TODAY AS EVER. IT'S MORE POWERFUL THAN IT WAS IN DAYS OF OLD.

JESUS IS A GREAT NAME WHICH MANY A LEARNED AND HOLY PERSON ESPOUSES IN THE HIGHEST PRIVILEGE AND MOST SACRED DUTY TO PREACH. IT'S A WORD WHICH THE EVANGELIST TAKES TO THE HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES OF EVERY TOWN, CITY, HAMLET, AND VILLAGE.

NO OTHER NAME CAN LIFT THE BURDEN OF SIN AND SORROW FROM YOUR SOUL AND FILL IT WITH PEACE AND PURITY.

JESUS IS THE ALL POWERFUL NAME THAT BRINGS HEALING TO THE SICK, COMFORT TO THE COMFORTLESS, AND JOY TO THE JOYLESS.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, THE BLIND RECEIVE THEIR SIGHT.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, THE DEAF GET THEIR HEARING BACK.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, THE MUTE LEARN TO SPEAK.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, THE LAME PROCEED TO WALK.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, THE DEAD WILL RISE TO LIFE.

JESUS IS THE PRICELESS NAME. IT HAS CALLED MANY FROM THE DARKNESS OF SIN TO THE MARVELOUS LIGHT OF TRUTH.

JESUS IS A DIVINE NAME ON WHOSE AUTHORITY WE SANCTIFY THE DEAREST OF LIFE'S RELATIONSHIPS; WE BAPTIZE THE CONVERTED - IN THE NAME OF JESUS; WE CELEBRATE MARRIAGE - IN THE NAME OF JESUS. WE COMMIT THE DEAD TO THE GRAVE - IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

WHEREVER THE NAME OF JESUS IS PROCLAIMED, IT INSPIRES

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE.

THOSE WHO HEAR THE NAME JESUS PUT THEIR FAITH IN HIM, THEIR TRUST IN HIM, TURN THEIR LIVES OVER TO HIM - THE PRECIOUS NAME OF JESUS.

JESUS, THE CHOICE OF ALL BLESSINGS.

JESUS, THE WELL SPRING OF ALL JOY.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? NAMES CONVEY THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE PERSON OR THING SO NAMED. NAMES ARE POWERFUL. WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH THE NAME OF A CHURCH?

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

WELL, FOR ONE THING, THE NAME OF A CHURCH SUGGESTS INHERITED CHARACTER OF THAT CHURCH. SOME CHURCHES ARE NAMED AFTER PLACES, CERTAIN CITIES, AND TOWNS. SOME CHURCHES ARE NAMED AFTER STREETS, AVENUES, AND DRIVES. SOME CHURCHES TAKE THE NAMES OF FAMOUS PERSONS SUCH AS TUBMAN OR KING. SOME CHURCHES HAVE BIBLICAL NAMES. GREAT CARE MUST BE TAKEN IN SELECTING THE NAME OF A CHURCH.

REMEMBER THE NAME SUGGESTS THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE THING NAMED. JUST BECAUSE A NAME OR WORD IS IN THE BIBLE, DOES NOT MEAN IT IS THE RIGHT NAME FOR THE CHURCH. IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT IT CONVEYS A POSITIVE IMAGE. THE WORD HELL IS IN THE BIBLE. BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE A MEMBER OF A CHURCH CALLED HELL BAPTIST CHURCH. JEZEBEL IS IN THE BIBLE, BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE A PART OF A CHURCH CALLED JEZEBEL MEMORIAL CHURCH. I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE A PART OF

JUDAS ISCARIOT CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

NAMES ARE IMPORTANT! WHEN YOU ASK PEOPLE THE NAME OF YOUR CHURCH OR THEY ASK YOU THE NAME OF YOUR CHURCH, YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE TO BE EMBARRASSED TO TELL THEM.

SOMETIMES IT DOES NOT MATTER WHETHER THE CHOIR SINGS GOOD. SOMETIMES IT DOES NOT MATTER THAT THE PREACHER TRIES TO PREACH. SOMETIMES THE PEOPLE NEVER GET PAST THE NAME TO HEAR THE CHOIR OR TO HEAR THE PREACHER BECAUSE OF THE NAME. NAMES HAVE POWER.

SOME OF YOU HAVE TOLD ME THAT PEOPLE DON'T WANT A CHURCH WHERE JESUS CHRIST SAYS IN THE BIBLE THAT IT'S LUKE WARM - NEITHER HOT NOR COLD. HE WANTED TO SPIT IT OUT OF HIS MOUTH.

WE CAN SMUGLY SIT BACK IN OUR SEAT OF COMFORT AND SAY 'WELL, THAT'S NOT OUR CHURCH. THAT WAS A CHURCH BACK IN THE FIRST CENTURY IN ASIA MINOR. THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH US.' BUT YOU'RE MISTAKEN.

THERE IS SUCH A THING AS BEING GUILTY BY ASSOCIATION. PEOPLE ASSOCIATE CHURCHES WITH THE NAMES THEY BEAR. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT SOME OF THE CHURCHES ARE COMING UP WITH SOME OF THE NAMES THEY HAVE: DELIVERANCE CATHEDRAL, LOVE CHRISTIAN CENTER, TALL HOUSE OF DELIVERANCE.

YOU MAY NOT UNDERSTAND OR AGREE WITH THEIR THEOLOGY, BUT THEY KNOW ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT PEOPLE JUDGE YOU BY THE NAME YOU BEAR. AND THE NAME YOU BEAR CONVEY'S SOMETHING NEGATIVE NO MATTER HOW GOOD THE CHURCH IS, NO MATTER HOW

GOOD THE CHOIR SINGS, NO MATTER HOW MUCH MINISTRY IS GOING ON IN THE CHURCH, YOU WILL NEVER REACH YOUR FULL POTENTIAL BECAUSE OF THE HEAVY BURDEN OF THE NAME AROUND YOUR NECK, DRAGGING YOU DOWN.

THE CHURCH IS NOT A MUTUAL ADORATION SOCIETY. WE DON'T JUST TURN OUT HERE TO MAKE EACH OTHER FEEL GOOD, WE'RE HERE TO REACH OUT TO OTHERS.

THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST, FOREVER REACHING OUT TO OTHERS IN THE NAME OF JESUS. AS WE ENDEAVOR TO REACH OUT TO OTHERS IN THE WORLD IN NAME OF JESUS, WE WANT TO GO FORWARD IN A POSITIVE VAIN. WE DON'T WANT TO GIVE PEOPLE ANY EXCUSE FOR NOT VISITING US, NO STUDENT FOR NOT JOINING US. WE WANT FOLKS TO KNOW THAT WE ARE ON FIRE FOR THE LORD.

AS A CHURCH WE WANT TO EMULATE THE MACEDONIA CHRISTIAN THAT FIRST GAVE THEMSELVES TO THE LORD. THE MACEDONIANS WERE SERIOUS, SUPPORTIVE, AND STAYED IN THE WORD EVERY DAY. EVERY DAY THEY SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES TO SEE IF WHAT PAUL SAID WAS TRUE.

THERE'S SOMETHING POSITIVE TO IDENTIFY WITH. THERE'S SOMETHING OUR CHILDREN IN YEARS TO COME WILL BE PROUD OF. THEY'LL BE PROUD TO TELL THEIR PEERS IN SCHOOL THAT THEY ARE NOT ASHAMED OF WHAT THEIR CHURCH IS. A CHURCH THAT KNOWS THE WORD. THERE'S SOMETHING THAT EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH CAN TAKE PRIDE IN AS WE CONTINUE TO SHAPE THE MINISTRY OF OUR CONGREGATION AS THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES DIRECTION.

THE BIBLE IS FULL OF NAME CHANGES. THESE CHANGES OF

NAMES IN THE BIBLE SIGNIFY NEW PURPOSE, NEW DIRECTION, NEW VISION.

ONE DAY THE LORD SPOKE TO A MAN NAMED ABRAM AND SAID "ABRAM, NO LONGER WILL YOU BE CALLED ABRAM, BUT ABRAHAM FOR I HAVE MADE YOU A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS." THEN GOD TURNED AROUND AND RENAMED SARAI, SARAH. AND THEN GOD CHANGED JACOB'S NAME TO ISRAEL.

JESUS CHANGED SIMON'S NAME TO PETER. SAUL BECAME PAUL. EACH TIME THE NAME WAS CHANGED, THE PERSON INVOLVED WAS GIVEN A NEW LIFE. NO WONDER OUR GREAT, GREAT, GREAT GRAND PARENTS USE TO SING OUT IN THE FIELDS "I TOLD JESUS, IT'S ALL RIGHT TO CHANGE MY NAME."

ISAIAH 62, VERSE 2 SAYS "THE NATION WILL SEE YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ALL THE KINGS YOUR GLORY. YOU WILL BE CALLED BY A NEW NAME, THAT THE MOUTH OF THE LORD WILL BESTOW. YOU WILL BE A CROWN OF SPLENDOR IN THE LORD'S HAND. A ROYAL DIADEM IN THE HAND OF YOUR GOD...PASS THROUGH THE GATES, PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE PEOPLE. BUILT UP WAYS THAT ARE BETTER FOR THE NATION. THE LORD HAS PROCLAIMED TRUE TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, SAY TO THE BATTLE GROUND, SEE THAT YOUR SAVIOR IS COME."

THAT'S WHAT JESUS MEANS, YOUR SAVIOR IS COME. SEE, HIS REWARD IS WITH HIM. THEY WILL BE CALLED THE HOLY PEOPLE, THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD, AND YOUR WILL BE SOUGHT OUT, A CITY NO LONGER DESERTED.

PASS THROUGH, PASS THROUGH THE GATES FROM KNOWN TO

UNKNOWN. PASS THROUGH THE GATES FROM PROVEN TO UNPROVEN. PASS THROUGH THE GATES FROM GRASS TO ROOTS. PASS THROUGH THE GATES FROM MATERIAL REALITY TO SPIRITUAL REALITY. PASS THROUGH THE GATES OF GOALS ACHIEVED TO GOALS PURSUED.

COME ON AND PASS THROUGH THE GATES, REMOVE A STONE, AND WAGE A BATTLE - WHAT'S IN A NAME?

THOSE WHO KNOW THE WORD OF GOD AND WHO'S FAITH IS BUILT, NOT ON TRADITION; WHO'S FAITH IS BUILT, NOT ON LOYALTY TO MAN; BUT WHOSE FAITH IS BUILT ON JESUS BLOOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.

WE DON'T WANT TO BUILD OR BE ASSOCIATED WITH THAT WHICH THE BIBLE SPEAKS BAD ABOUT, BUT WE WANT TO AFFIRM A POSITIVE IMAGE RIGHT OUT OF THE BIBLE WHICH GIVES A CLEAR IDEA OF WHO WE ARE AS A PEOPLE OF GOD. WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO LET OUR LIGHT SHINE IN THIS COMMUNITY AS NEVER BEFORE. WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEND A RESOUNDING MESSAGE.

ALL OVER THE COUNTY, ALL OVER NORTH CAROLINA, ALL OVER AMERICA THAT WE KNOW THE WORD AND WE CHOOSE TO IDENTIFY OURSELVES - NOT WITH SOMETHING NEGATIVE; BUT WITH SOMETHING UNDENIABLY AND UNQUESTIONABLY POSITIVE.

PROVERBS 22:1 SAYS "A GOOD NAME IS TO BE CHOSEN RATHER THAN GREAT RICHES, AND FAVOR IS BETTER THAN SILVER OR GOLD."

ECCLESIASTES 7:1 ONE SAYS "A GOOD NAME IS BETTER THAN PRECIOUS OINTMENT..."

WHAT'S IN A NAME? A NAME TELLS SOMETHING ABOUT THAT WHICH IS NAMED. A NAME HAS POWER. A NAME WILL TURN FOLK ON

OR TURN FOLK OFF. NAMES CAN LEAVE A SWEET TASTE IN ONE'S MOUTH. THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THE NAME OF JESUS.

JESUS' NAME HAS POWER. IT IS POSITIVE AND IT HAS POWER. IT LEAPS OUT, IT HAS POWER. IT CONSOLES, IT HAS POWER. IT EXCITES, IT HAS POWER. IT SAVES, IT HAS POWER.

YOU'RE TO GIVE HIM THE NAME JESUS FOR HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS. THE NAME OF JESUS IS SO SWEET. I LOVE IT'S MUSIC TO REPEAT. IT MAKES MY LIFE, FULL AND COMPLETE - THE PRECIOUS NAME OF JESUS.

JESUS, EVERY DAY THE SAME.

JESUS, LET ALL SAINTS PROCLAIM, JESUS IS WORTHY TO BE PRAISED.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

I LOVE THE NAME JESUS, WHO KNOWS ALL MY GRIEFS AND WHO TEARS MY ANCIENT FEARS APART.

WHAT'S IN, WHAT'S IN A NAME - THAT NAME I LOVE TO HEAR, IT NEVER BORES MY HEART - LIFT UP, THE NAME OF JESUS.

PRAISE THE NAME OF JESUS. YOUR NAME SPEAKS OF YOUR NATURE, YOUR CHARACTER, YOUR REPUTATION. A GOOD NAME IS MORE PRECIOUS THAN ALL THE JEWELS, GOLD, AND SILVER.

LET US PRAY - IN THE NAME OF JESUS."

APPENDIX E - WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
By The Reverend Pamela June Anderson

CHRISTIAN LESSON - LUKE 8:26-39

26 SO THEY ARRIVED AT THE OTHER SIDE, IN THE GERASENE COUNTRY ACROSS THE LAKE FROM GALILEE.

27 AS HE WAS CLIMBING OUT OF THE BOAT A MAN FROM THE CITY OF GADARA CAME TO MEET HIM, A MAN WHO HAD BEEN DEMON-POSSESSED FOR A LONG TIME. HOMELESS AND NAKED, HE LIVED IN A CEMETERY AMONG THE TOMBS.

28 AS SOON AS HE SAW JESUS HE SHRIEKED AND FELL TO THE GROUND BEFORE HIM, SCREAMING, :WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME, JESUS, SON OF GOD MOST HIGH? PLEASE, I BEG YOU, OH, DON'T TORMENT ME!"

29 FOR JESUS WAS ALREADY COMMANDING THE DEMON TO LEAVE HIM. THIS DEMON HAD OFTEN TAKEN CONTROL OF THE MAN SO THAT EVEN WHEN SHACKLED WITH CHAINS HE SIMPLY BROKE THEM AND RUSHED OUT INTO THE DESERT, COMPLETELY UNDER THE DEMON'S POWER.

30 "WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" JESUS ASKED THE DEMON. "LEGION," THEY REPLIED - FOR THE MAN WAS FILLED WITH THOUSANDS OF THEM!

31 THEY BEGGED JESUS NOT TO ORDER THEM INTO THE BOTTOMLESS PIT.

32 A HERD OF PIGS WAS FEEDING ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE NEARBY, AND THE DEMONS PLED WITH HIM TO LET THEM ENTER INTO THE PIGS. AND JESUS SAID THEY COULD.

33 SO THEY LEFT THE MAN AND WENT INTO THE PIGS, AND IMMEDIATELY THE WHOLE HERD RUSHED DOWN THE MOUNTAINSIDE AND FELL OVER A CLIFF INTO THE LAKE BELOW, WHERE THEY DROWNED.

34 THE HERDSMEN RUSHED AWAY TO THE NEARBY CITY, SPREADING THE NEWS AS THEY RAN.

35 SOON A CROWD CAME OUT TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND SAW THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN DEMON-POSSESSED SITTING QUIETLY AT JESUS' FEET.

36 THEN THOSE WHO HAD SEEN IT HAPPEN TOLD HOW THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN HAD BEEN HEALED.

37 AND EVERYONE BEGGED JESUS TO GO AWAY AND LEAVE THEM ALONE (FOR A DEEP WAVE OF FEAR HAD SWEPT OVER THEM).

SO HE RETURNED TO THE BOAT AND LEFT FOR THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LAKE.

38 THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN DEMON-POSSESSED BEGGED TO GO TOO, BUT JESUS SAID NO.

39 "GO BACK TO YOUR FAMILY," HE TOLD HIM, "AND TELL THEM WHAT A WONDERFUL THING GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU." SO HE WENT ALL THROUGH THE CITY TELLING EVERYONE ABOUT JESUS' MIGHTY MIRACLE.

LET US PRAY

OPEN OUR EYES, OUR EARS, OUR HEARTS, OUR SPIRIT TO HEAR THE REST OF WHAT THE SPIRIT HAS TO SAY TO THIS CHURCH ON THE HILL WHERE PRAYER IS CHANGING PEOPLE AND PEOPLE ARE CHANGING THINGS. AMEN

39 "GO BACK TO YOUR FAMILY," HE TOLD HIM, "AND TELL THEM WHAT A WONDERFUL THING GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU." SO HE WENT ALL THROUGH THE CITY TELLING EVERYONE ABOUT JESUS' MIGHTY MIRACLE.

THIS WEEK I COMPLETED A STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF THIS CHURCH. IT WAS A FASCINATING ADVENTURE THAT BROUGHT A LOT OF CLARITY TO THE VARIOUS STRANDS OF OPINION ABOUT US AND OUR TRADITION.

WHEN KING HENRY VII BROKE WITH THE CHURCH OF ROME AND ESTABLISHED THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, ENGLAND MOVED BEYOND PERMANENT CATHOLIC CONTROL. IN LESS THAN TEN YEARS, CATHOLIC MARY TUDOR, QUEEN OF ENGLAND, EXECUTED THOMAS CRANMER (AUTHOR OF "BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER"). THIS FLAGRANT ACT RESULTED IN OVER 800 DISSENTERS FLEEING UNDER THE JOHN CALVIN, ET.AL. WHEN THE DISSENTERS RETURNED FROM EUROPE, THEY SOUGHT TO PURIFY THE CHURCH. SO NAMED PURITANS THESE DISSENTERS "CRITICIZED ANGLICAN LITURGY AND CEREMONIES, AMONG OTHER THINGS. THEIR THRUST TOWARD INDEPENDENT THOUGHT AND CHURCH AUTONOMY LAID THE FOUNDATIONS FOR

CONGREGATIONALISM".[27]

> "THE PURITANS HELD TO REFORMED BELIEF IN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE AS THE REVELATION OF GOD'S WILL, AND THE NECESSITY TO BEND TO THE WILL OF GOD. THE PURITANS REGARDED HUMAN RITUALS AND INSTITUTIONS AS IDOLATROUS IMPOSITIONS UPON THE WORD OF GOD".[28]

NOT EVEN THE NEW TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO THE KING JAMES VERSION SATISFIED THE PURITANS. THEY SEPARATED FROM THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND, UNABLE TO AGREE AMONG THEMSELVES ABOUT THEIR DIFFERENCES WITH THE CHURCH, BECAME SEPARATIST; LATER TO BE CALLED QUAKERS, BAPTISTS, AND CONGREGATIONALIST. WHEN THE SEPARATIST CHURCH WAS DISCOVERED, MANY OF ITS FOLLOWERS FLED TO HOLLAND. IT WAS THIS GROUP THAT BECAME PILGRIMS AND ARRIVED IN AMERICA ON THE MAYFLOWER IN 1620. ROBERT BROWNE, AN ANGLICAN PRIEST ADVOCATED CONGREGATIONALISM.

WHAT SLIGHTLY ALARMED ME, HOWEVER, WAS THIS REALITY - BY 1931, THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED AND BECAME CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES. THEREFORE, THERE IS LEGALLY NO SUCH ANIMAL AS A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST.

ANOTHER BIT OF HISTORY THAT I FIND UNSETTLING IS THIS - WHILE HISTORY SAYS THAT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IS HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY JOHN CALVIN, THE PURITANS, THE SEPARATISTS, AND THE PILGRIMS, HISTORY DOES NOT EMPHASIZE THAT

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[27]Ibid., p. 10.

[28]Ibid., p. 10.

CONGREGATIONALISTS ARE ALSO DESCENDANTS OF A PEOPLE WHO DISPLACED NATIVE AMERICANS AND WERE INVADERS OF ANCESTRAL TERRITORIES. WHILE CONGREGATIONALISTS ARE OF THE TRADITION THAT FREES US FROM ECCLESIASTICAL HOMAGE, IT WAS THE CONGREGATIONALISTS WHO INITIALLY SUPPORTED EXCLUDING BLACKS FROM MEMBERSHIP IN CHURCHES WHEN THEY WERE UNABLE TO MEET CERTAIN CONDITIONS DETERMINED BY WHITES. WHILE CONGREGATIONALIST ARE TRADITIONALLY AUTONOMOUS AND SELF-GOVERNED, EARLY ON THEY TREATED BLACKS AS SLAVES OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. IN FACT, AROUND 1646, CONGREGATIONALIST EXCLUDED BLACKS, CATHOLICS, AND PRESBYTERIANS. BUT THIS IS NOT NEARLY AS UNNERVING AS THE QUESTION OF OUR LEGAL STATUS.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT MAYFLOWER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH? WHAT DOES OUR COMMUNITY THINK OF THIS CHURCH?

WHAT DOES YOUR NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR THINK OF THIS CHURCH?

RETURN TO YOU HOME, SAYS VERSE 39, AND DECLARE HOW MUCH GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU.

RETURN TO THE PEOPLE WHO KNEW YOU FIRST.

RETURN TO THE PEOPLE WHO KNEW YOU WHEN.

RETURN TO THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW YOU THE MOST.

RETURN TO THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW YOU BEST.

RETURN TO THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW STUFF OTHERS WILL NEVER KNOW. FOLKS WHO HAVE INFORMATION BETTER FORGOTTEN, FOLKS WHO ARE WELL ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR PAST.

TO THEM, JESUS SAYS, YOU SHOULD RETURN.

THE PERSON RETURNS, NOT TO BE PUT DOWN - BUT TO DECLARE

HOW MUCH GOD HAS DONE. THE PERSON RETURNS, NOT TO BE SHAMED OR SHUNNED - BUT TO DECLARE HOW MUCH GOD HAS DONE. THE PERSON RETURNS, NOT TO BE HUMILIATED OR HURT - BUT TO DECLARE HOW MUCH GOD HAS DONE.

YOU MAY ASK "BUT CAN'T A PERSON DO THAT ANYWHERE?" DOESN'T EVERYBODY NEED TO KNOW "HOW MUCH GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU?"

DOESN'T EVERYBODY NEED TO KNOW WHO JESUS IS? IF SO, WHY RETURN HOME TO TELL IT?

IF GOD HAS DONE A MIRACLE IN YOUR LIFE,

IF GOD HAS GIVEN YOU VICTORY OVER VICES,

IF GOD HAS GIVEN YOU TRIUMPH OVER TROUBLE,

IF GOD HAS GIVEN YOU PEACE OVER PROBLEMS

IF GOD HAS GIVEN YOU LIFE OVER DEATH,

IF GOD HAS GIVEN YOU LOVE OVER LIP SERVICE,

IF GOD HAS GIVEN YOU HOLY BOLDNESS OVER HELPLESS BLINDNESS

IF GOD HAS GIVEN YOU SAVORY OVER SALTLESSNESS

IF GOD HAS GIVEN YOU HEALING OVER SICKNESS

IF GOD HAS GIVEN YOU UNITY OVER CONFUSION

WHY RETURN HOME TO TELL IT? WHY NOT JUST TELL IT WHERE YOU ARE?

WELL! AT HOME, OTHERS WILL IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZE THE CHANGE.

AT HOME, OTHERS WILL ATTEST TO THE DIFFERENCE RIGHT A WAY.

AT HOME OTHERS WILL SEE THE MIRACLE INSTANTLY.

AT HOME OTHERS WILL EXPERIENCE THE VICTORY STRAIGHTAWAY.

IT'S HARD TO FOOL FOLK AT HOME.

IT'S HARD TO FAKE A MIRACLE AT HOME.

IT'S HARD TO PUT ON AIRS AT HOME.

IT'S HARD TO COUNTERFEIT TRUTH AT HOME.

IT'S HARD TO IMITATE WHOLENESS AT HOME.

IT'S HARD TO CONTRIVE RESPECT AT HOME.

THE RETURN HOME IS NOT TO CONFIRM THAT YOU HAVE CHANGED. IT IS TO AFFIRM GOD'S GOODNESS AND WHAT JESUS HAS DONE.

WHILE THIS CAN BE DIRECTED TO EVERYBODY, A GENERIC YOU, JESUS ALSO GIVES THIS DIRECTION TO A PARTICULAR YOU.

IT IS NOT JUST AN ENCYCLOPEDIC LEGEND, SUSPENSE FABLE, OR RAG TO RICHES SCOOP...

THE "YOU" TO WHOM JESUS GIVES THE COMMAND IS NOT THE PRODUCT OF THE RIGHT PREP SCHOOL, THE RIGHT COLLEGE, THE RIGHT GRAD SCHOOL...

THE "YOU" TO WHOM JESUS GIVES THE COMMAND IS NOT THE OUTCOME OF THE RIGHT PARENTS, THE RIGHT NEIGHBORHOOD, THE RIGHT PEDIGREE, THE RIGHT CHURCH...

THE "YOU" TO WHOM JESUS GIVES THE COMMAND DOES NOT HAVE THE RIGHT SPOUSE, THE RIGHT JOB, THE RIGHT CHILD, THE RIGHT FRIEND, THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS, THE RIGHT NETWORK, THE RIGHT CONTACT...

THE "YOU" TO WHOM JESUS GIVES THE COMMAND IS A LOSER. THE CHARACTER IN OUR BIBLICAL LESSON THIS MORNING IS A LOSER.

HOLY WRIT DOES NOT PROVIDE US WITH A CHRONOLOGY OF HIS LIFE. WE CAN SPECULATE THAT HE MAY HAVE BEEN A SUCCESS AND PRIDE BROUGHT HIM DOWN. WE CAN SUGGEST THAT HE MAY HAVE HAD A NEGATIVE REACTION TO THE RAGE WITHIN PROFESSIONAL MALES OF COLOR BECAUSE WITH ALL THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT THEY ARE STILL DENOUNCED BY THE SYSTEM. WE CAN HYPOTHESIZE THAT HE COULD HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF AN ABUSIVE FATHER OR MOTHER. WE CAN SURMISE THAT THE PLANT WHERE HE WORKED MAY HAVE SHUT DOWN. WE CAN INFER HIS INDULGENCE WITH MIND ALTERING DRUGS. WE CAN POSSIBLY SUBMIT SOME AFFECT TO AUTHORITIES BRANDING HIM WITH EDUCATIONALLY, SOPHISTICATED, NEGATIVE SUGGESTIONS - LIKE REBELLIOUS, UNDISCIPLINED, IMMATURE, IRRESPONSIBLE, DISRUPTIVE, TOO EXPRESSIVE, ADS - ALL DESIGNED, STILL, TO CRIPPLE OUR YOUNG MEN;

WE CAN APPROPRIATELY IMAGINE THAT HE MAY NOT HAVE HAD A CHANCE FROM DAY ONE.

THIS WE DO KNOW - WHEN WE DO MEET HIM, HE IS TROUBLED, CONFUSED, TORMENTED, DISORIENTED, NAKED, AND HOMELESS.

HE FINDS MORE COMPANY LIVING IN THE CEMETERY AMONG DEAD FOLK THAN IN THE HOOD OR IN THE CHURCH.

HE'S A PITIFUL SIGHT - BUT JESUS DOES NOT OFFER HIM PITY

HE'S A PATHETIC SPECTACLE - BUT JESUS DOES NOT OFFER

HIM CO-DEPENDENCE.

HE'S A DESPICABLE PHENOMENON - BUT JESUS DOES NOT RENDER HIM CATASTROPHIC.

JESUS ENCOUNTERS HIM RATHER THAN EXCUSING HIM OR DISMISSING HIM OR JUSTIFYING HIM - JESUS ENCOUNTERS HIM WITH A QUESTION "WHAT IS YOUR NAME?"

SOME WILL QUICKLY ANSWER

DR. MLK, JR.

MAYOR DENNIS ARCHER

REPRESENTATIVE BARBARA ROSE COLLINS

PROFESSOR BARBARA JORDAN

DEACON BORN AGAIN

TRUSTEE FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST

JUDGE THURGOOD MARSHALL

ALL WOULD PROUDLY STATE THEIR NAMES, PROUDLY WEAR THE NAME RECOGNITION IN THEIR TITLES.

"WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" IS NOT MERELY A QUESTION DESIGNED SO THAT THE SANE, SECURE, SUCCESSFUL CAN ANSWER - AND THE INSANE, INSECURE, UNSUCCESSFUL CANNOT ANSWER.

"WHAT IS YOUR NAME? GOES TO THE HEART OF THE HUMAN CONDITION.

"WHAT IS YOUR NAME? IS ALSO RELATED TO POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

IF YOU RECALL, FOR EXAMPLE, ALEX HALEY'S MINI SERIES <u>ROOTS</u>, THIS QUESTION BROUGHT FORTH THE ANSWER "KUNTA KENTE - A COMPLEX ANSWER WHICH CONTAINED AFRICA, FREEDOM, MANHOOD,

AND DIGNITY. THAT NAME WAS TO BE REPLACED WITH "TOBY", THE POLITICALLY CORRECT NAME.

TOBY - WHICH COMMUNICATED SUBSERVIENCE, INFERIORITY, SLAVERY, EMASCULATION, AND IMPOTENCY. OUR AFRICAN NAMES HAVE TOO MUCH AUTHORITY, TOO MUCH POWER, AND TOO MUCH HISTORY. THE OTHER NAME REFLECTS WEAKNESS, POWERLESSNESS, AND INEFFECTIVENESS.

A POLITICAL QUESTION IS "WHO HAS THE POWER TO NAME?" AND WHO HAS THE POWER TO RENAME? AND WHO HAS THE POWER TO RENAME AGAIN? -

JESUS DIDN'T ASK THE CROWD WHAT THE MAN'S NAME WAS - HE SAID "WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" IMAGINE WHAT ANSWERS JESUS WOULD HAVE FROM OTHERS:

DEMENTED/LUNATIC/WILD MAN/CRAZY/DERANGED/BERSERK

BUT JESUS DIDN'T ASK THE PEOPLE, HE ASKED THE MAN.

IMAGINE YOUR CO-WORKERS, COLLEAGUES, FAMILY MEMBERS, OR NEIGHBORS ANSWERING THE QUESTION "WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" SOME OF THE NAMES WE COULDN'T EVEN REPEAT IN THE CHURCH.

BUT JESUS CHALLENGES THE POWER OF THE NAMERS AS HE GOES TO THE PERSON TO GET THE ANSWER. WE NEED TO MEET PEOPLE AND OURSELVES IN JESUS' WAYS INSTEAD OF MEETING LABELS AND TITLES. LABELS LIKE

UNEMPLOYABLE	UNTRAINABLE
UNTEACHABLE	UNDERPRIVILEGED
UNDERSKILLED	UNDERCLASS
HOPELESS	HELPLESS

DEPRIVED DISADVANTAGED

TOO OFTEN THE QUESTION "WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" RAISES OTHER QUESTIONS:

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MY FAMILY NAME?

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT PEOPLE CALL ME WHEN THEY'RE ANGRY?

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW THE NAMES OF PEOPLE WHO ABUSE ME, HURT ME, WOUND ME, SHAME ME, AND UNDERMINE ME?

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MY SPECIAL NAME, MY PROFESSIONAL NAME, MY CHURCH NAME, MY ADULT NAME?

GO TO ANY YUPPY GATHERING OR BUPPY CHURCH - THE SUPERFICIALITY IS AMAZING. WHEN PEOPLE ASK YOUR NAME OR INTRODUCE THEMSELVES, IT IS OFTEN ABOUT WHAT YOU DO, WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID ABOUT YOU (I.E., IS YOUR NAME RECOGNIZABLE), AND WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR ME?

BUT JESUS KEPT ON ASKING "WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" AND FINALLY THE ANSWER COMES "MY NAME IS LEGION" WHICH MEANS THOUSANDS?

MY GOD! CAN YOU IMAGINE BEING POSSESSED WITH SO MANY NAMES:

CONFUSED	ANGRY
DIVISIVE	IRRESPONSIBLE
POWER HUNGRY	INDIFFERENT
APATHETIC	DISRUPTIVE
MEAN SPIRITED	UNDERMINED
DESTRUCTIVE	VOLATILE
ERRATIC	

EVERY THING YOU TOUCH TURNS SOUR

EVERY THING YOU SAY IS TWISTED AROUND

EVERY THING YOU DO IS A TRAVESTY

EVERY THING YOU THINK IS NEGATIVE

EVERY VOICE YOU HEAR IS MISINTERPRETED

EVERY WORD YOU SPEAK IS DISTRACTING

EVERY DEED YOU DO TARES DOWN WHAT OTHERS ARE TRYING TO BUILD UP EVERY DECISION YOU MAKE TO UNDERMINE THE DECISION OF THE WHOLE

EVERY GESTURE YOU DISPLAY CREATES MORE DISTRUST

THIS MAN WAS A TORMENTED, TROUBLED, CONFLICTED SOUL - A CASUALTY OF INNER STRIFE, INNER BATTLES, INTERNAL WARFARE. HIS MIND WAS LEGION BECAUSE SO MANY VOICES WERE VYING FOR POWER, INTERNALLY, THAT THE OUTSIDE OF HIM COULD NOT PROPERLY FUNCTION.

HE WAS SO CONFUSED HE CONFUSED HIS OWN CONFUSION.

HE MISTOOK GOOD FOR EVIL

HE SUPERSEDED HEALING FOR AFFLICTION

HE DISPLACED FREEDOM FOR BONDAGE

HE REJECTED SALVATION FOR OPPRESSION

JESUS ISN'T THE TORMENTOR - HE'S THE SAVIOR

JESUS ISN'T THE AGGRESSOR - JESUS IS THE LIBERATOR

JESUS ISN'T THE MAN'S ENEMY - HE IS OUR FRIEND.

JESUS WON'T MAKE YOU SICK - JESUS COMES TO HEAL

JESUS WON'T TURN YOU AWAY - HE WILL LIFT YOU UP.

JESUS KNOWS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JOY AND SORROW.

JESUS KNOWS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

JESUS KNOWS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HOPE AND DESPAIR.

JESUS KNOWS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIBERATION AND OPPRESSION.

JESUS DIDN'T ENCOUNTER THE MAN JUST TO ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION. JESUS CONFRONTED THE MAN SO THAT THE MAN COULD EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE THAT ONLY JESUS CAN GIVE.

JESUS ENCOUNTERS US SO WE CAN EXPERIENCE HEALING IN OUR INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE BODY

JESUS ENCOUNTERS US SO WE CAN EXPERIENCE:

DELIVERANCE IN OUR MIND

SALVATION IN OUR SOULS

FREEDOM FROM EVIL

LIBERATION FROM DEATH

PLEASE NOTE THAT HOLY WRIT POINTS OUT THAT PEOPLE IN THE VICINITY WANTED JESUS TO LEAVE. PEOPLE HAD GOTTEN USE TO THIS MAN ACTING CRAZY. PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY HAD ADJUSTED TO THE SCREAMING AND ARGUING. PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY HAD LABELED THIS MAN AS HOPELESS. AND WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE CAME - THESE SAME PEOPLE WOULD NOT BELIEVE, WOULD NOT ACCEPT, WOULD NOT CHANGE THEIR MADE UP MINDS AND TOLD JESUS TO GET OUT OF THEIR COUNTRY.

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT JESUS - THE MAN WHO HAD PERFORMED THE MIRACLE - BEING TOLD TO GET OUT.

THIS IS NOT A DEMAND PECULIAR TO THE FIRST CENTURY.

AFTER EMANCIPATION, ALL THE SLAVES DID NOT LEAVE THE

MASTER'S PLANTATION. SOME FOUND SLAVERY MORE PALATABLE.

CONFUSION IS NOT A CONDITION PECULIAR TO THE 19TH CENTURY EITHER. DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, SOME CITIES WANTED TO MAINTAIN DISCRIMINATION.

AND AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, IF WE DO NOT ANSWER THE QUESTION CORRECTLY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE CHURCH WILL PREFER SINGING ONLY WHITE SONGS, TO A WHITE JESUS, HANGING ON A WHITE WALL, IN A WHITE CHURCH OR A CHURCH THAT USE TO BE WHITE.

WELL! I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO DO, BUT I WANT TO DO WHAT JESUS COMMANDED OF ME AND TELL WHAT GREAT THINGS GOD IS DOING

GOD IS STILL SETTING THE CAPTIVE FREE

GOD IS STILL IN THE BLESSING BUSINESS

GOD IS STILL KEEPING GOD'S PROMISE

GOD IS STILL POURING OUT THAT PRECIOUS HOLY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH

GOD IS STILL PRODUCING PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND ARE SAVED

GOD IS STILL ANSWERING PRAYER

GOD IS STILL A WHEEL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WHEEL

GOD IS STILL ON HIS THRONE

GOD IS STILL IN CONTROL

GOD IS STILL GIVING THIS CHURCH A NEW NAME

GOD IS STILL TRIUMPHANT OVER THE POWERS OF EVIL

GOD IS STILL ALPHA AND OMEGA...LET US STAND

APPENDIX F - ADDRESS FOR THE 1994 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CHURCH ON THE HILL
THE REVEREND PAMELA JUNE ANDERSON, PASTOR

As a church, we have shared a year fulfilling common dreams and visions for our church, our neighborhood, our children, our friends, ourselves, and the global village. We have also experienced the despair and discomfort that comes from allowing nightmares and blind individuality to impede our attaining maximum favor with God, Biblical astuteness, and Christlikeness.

The Church Universal has struggled with the will of God and the will of people since the Genesis account of the anti-God conning the African father and mother of the earth into disregarding, disrespecting, and disobeying God - the Creator of all that is.

Until Christ's birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection, the Hebrew Testament prevailed. Commonly called the Old Testament, it provides basic truths and consequences - an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. God's judgements were quickly executed unless prophets and prophetesses appealed to God's mercy.

Since Christ's resurrection, the Spirit of Grace prevails. But for many it's a cheap grace; misappropriated, exploited, and taken for granted in the continuing battle between the will of God and the will of the anti-god.

In the 1950's, a new consciousness, a new awareness, a new quest for spirituality entered the human world. More and more, people realized a power greater than humans and greater than the anti-god. This realization is causing a spiritual unfolding that science cannot examine, mathematics cannot calculate, money cannot buy, and politics cannot influence.

In our church profile, we have expressed concern for the spiritual, physical, and fiscal management of the church. The truth of the matter is this, the church in its totality is a Spiritual Institution, empowered by God's Holy Spirit, doing the business of the only begotten Child of God - the Christ. Words, behavior, and thoughts either support God's Son or the anti-god.

In our 1993 Annual Report, I presented the Vision and the Structure God gave to me as a guideline to use while serving the Office of the Pastor. As far as possible, I have been obedient to God's Vision and Structure for our church. As far as possible I will continue to direct my prayers and my energies to the Vision: (1) keeping before

the church the Christ, who is the Head of the Church, (2) working with and being accountable to Christ and the Moderator; (3) empowering the church to be Biblically and Spiritually pleasing in the sight of God.

Along with many who continue to support the Vision for our church, I have innumerable accomplishments to thank you and praise God for bringing to fruition:

- The remarkable insight and Spirit filled sensitivity that led the church to call and install a woman of God to be the earthly head of God's church;

- The adoption of a faith filled slogan identifying us as a church on the hill "where prayer is changing people and people are changing things;"

- We hosted two national church events: (1) The Female Clergy of Color of the United Church of Christ and (2) a worship service of the United Black Christians of the United Church of Christ.

- Our Board for Christian Education and the Higher Education Board sponsored five of our youth who attended the United Black Christians' Harambee.

- Our Music Committee (1) established the Nia Youth Choir, (2) sponsored a BBQ, (3) held its first Annual Choral Sounds Workshop and Concert, and (4) identified a youth musician;

- Our church became a center for a Headstart Program.

- Our church hosted a Bagley/Mayflower Community Meeting.

- We have significantly increased our giving of time, talent, and treasure. To date 16 people have joined our church.

- We received the Gospel from Undershepherds of other folds during our Lenten, fifth Sundays, and July Festival of Preachers.

- Our women of the church sponsored our first Sisterhood Celebrations.

- Our men of the church have replaced the concrete stairs to the Fellowship Hall.

- Our church honored two great men of God by naming the Chapel after the Reverend Henry T. Simmons and the Memorial Library after the Reverend William Judson

King.

- Our church office is ready for computerization and a member has donated a fax machine.

- Our church has made room for testimony, praise, and spirited worship on Sundays and Wednesdays.

- Our church is more Christ/African centered.

- Our Diaconate sponsored a Church Growth and Evangelism Event.

- We have introduced UJIMA, our young adult group.

- We are working on what it means to serve in an office in God's church - reverently, efficiently, and humbly.

Thanks be to God for our church profile, the revisioning process, our Constitution and ByLaws, and the Word of God. It is upon these Holy and approved documents that the Vision is empowered to energize us, unite us, and attract others to us. In an abbreviated form (see last years Annual Report for the complete Vision), the Vision is:

A CHRIST-CENTERED CHURCH
HOLY SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH
A GROWING CHURCH
A FASTING CHURCH
A PRAYING CHURCH
A TITHING CHURCH
A WORSHIPPING, CELEBRATING CHURCH
A TEACHING, BIBLICALLY LITERATE CHURCH
A LOVING, SHARING, CARING CHURCH
A POLITICALLY AWARE AND SOCIALLY ACTIVE CHURCH
A PROGRESSIVE AND AFRICAN CENTERED CHURCH
A MANAGEMENT CHURCH

As individual members work with, pray for, and take ownership of this Vision, the needs of the sick, confined, imprisoned, homeless, helpless, hungry, and hurting will be met. As we move forward, please bear in mind that a Vision is a Divine Plan and the Scripture "without a vision the people perish" is applicable to all of life. If we fail to plan, we plan to fail.

Thank you for a good year. I look forward to celebrating the 65th Anniversary of the church and the 30th Anniversary of African American membership and participation in the life of this church. Let us not grow weary in well doing. Keep looking toward the Vision and on the One helping us realize the Vision...in Christ.

APPENDIX G - Annual Meeting Address to the Church for 1995
THE PASTOR'S ADDRESS TO Mayflower...
...The Church on the Hill where prayer is changing people and people are changing things.

THE REVEREND PAMELA JUNE ANDERSON, PASTOR

As a church, we have overcome 90% of the blind individuality detaining our maximum favor with God, Biblical astuteness, and Christlikeness. To God be the glory. The church on the hill is evolving and aligning herself with Biblical truths and spiritual power and participating in the building of Christ's Kingdom within individual members.

It is a fact that the individual members who are Biblically based and Spiritually evolving inspire the greatest impact on church growth. God is richly empowering us to draw men, women, boys, and girls to Christ.

Our church is a Revisioned church. This means we are visionaries - developing spiritual sight with and through our Christ and the Word of God. The Revisioning process is our model for implementation through restructuring, preaching, teaching, thinking, and living as the church on the hill where prayer is changing people and people are changing things.

The Revisioning Process is also my doctoral project and dissertation which is evolving into a book. The Introduction to my dissertation states:

You reach a certain chronological age, your family, your schooling, your religious persuasion, and your environment has made you, molded you, and shaped you after their image and in their likeness. Spiritual transformation

and rebirth is about you and your God making you, molding you, and shaping you after the image and likeness you have been birthed to BE.

The entire writings have been named MY CHURCH MY SELF for a number of reasons. One of the reasons is my context in ministry - which is the local church pastor. If you are a believer, however, and seek to serve a higher Being than yourself, you are also a minister."

Another reason for MY CHURCH MY SELF is evident in our inherited faith - congregationalism. Both the Church of God Movement I grew up in and the denomination I am ordained by, the United Church of Christ, are European in their theology.

At the time our tradition merged with the Christian tradition in 1931, German Reformed, and German Evangelicals in 1957, the Southern African American churches were excluded. That is to say, we have inherited a faith that views religion, collects information, interprets data, applies knowledge, and established themselves from the European centered perspective. Comparatively speaking the majority of our Baptist, African Methodist, Muslim, Native American, and African American UCC brothers and sisters view the same from the African, Christ-Centered perspective.

The most important reason for the name MY CHURCH MY SELF has to do with being the Body of Christ and reflecting our image and likeness of God. God is love, spirit, and truth. Our name, our words, our behavior, our thoughts, and our lifestyles must BE molded after 'who' God has created us to BE.

Along with many who continue to support the Vision for our church, I have innumerable accomplishments to thank you and praise God for bringing to fruition in 1995:

January, 1995

- Conversations began on changing the name of the church.

February, 1995

- Draped pulpit and Communion Table with African fabric.

March, 1995

- Dedicated the Reverend Henry T. Simmons Chapel. Reverend Simmons is the immediate past, full time African American Pastor.

April, 1995

- Named our library after the late Reverend Judson William King, Interim Pastor and African American hero in the United Church of Christ.

- Launched the first Black College Tour for our youth.

May, 1995

- Participated in second conversations on changing the name of the church and established L'Amistad Courier as the church newsletter.

June, 1995

- Co-officiated first Christ/African Centered Wedding.

- Established a Parlor Series for jazz, gospel, and spiritual entertainment.

July, 1995

- Officiated third Christ/African Centered baptism.

August, 1995

- Supported the circulation of Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth Survey.

- Conferred with the Reverend Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., on extending his three days with our sister church to two additional days to be with The Church on the Hill in August, 1996.

September, 1995

- Shared results of Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth Survey with congregation.

October, 1995

- Developed and circulated community Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth Survey.

- Supported choir room be named after John T. Blackwell, retiring Minister of Music and director of the Amistad Chorale and Blackwell Singers.

- Established the Spirit of the L'Amistad Award to be given to person bearing 'we be free' attitude, attributes, and lifestyle.

- Established Biblical and spiritual guidelines for Spiritual Standard Bearing Leadership.

- Invited Off-Site Consultant, the Reverend G. Wesley Raney, to preach and teach stewardship and the value of a name.

- Preached with greater emphasis on spiritual transformation and rebirth.

- Began writing Imani's Corner for the Michigan Chronicle (the Detroit African American News).

- Convened in retreat with the Amistad Chorale and together agreed to faithful attendance and providing the church with spiritual/gospel music.

- The Community Alternative Resource Experience (C.A.R.E.) became officially incorporated by the State of Michigan.

November, 1995

- Compiled results of community Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth Survey.

- Supported renaming Hunger Project L'Amistad Thanksgiving and Brown Bag Hunger Project. Recommended all future ministries be named with Christ/African centeredness and/or African Americans.

- Established the Umoja Youth Group.

- Called the church to a Sunset-Sunrise Prayer Service.

- Attained support and entered into a covenant with the Diaconate to support the Naomi/Ruth Resolution (See Appendix F).

December, 1995

- Hosted an Advent Series on African Presence in the Bible.

- Dedicated the Hall of Imani which displays past and current Church Moderators and full time, Senior Pastors.

- Renamed Fifth Sunday Wider Church Sundays to Evangelism - Family and Friends Sunday.

- Hosted the Spirited Victory Convocation for women in

ministry, women entering ministry, women struggling with the call to ministry, and women dating, engaged, and married to ministers.

- Declared 1996 the year to focus on spiritual transformation, rebirth, and church growth.

Thanks be to God for our church profile, the revisioning process, our revised Constitution and ByLaws, and the Word of God. It is upon these Holy and approved documents that the Vision is empowered to energize us, unite us, and attract others to the Christ in us. In an abbreviated form, the Vision continues to be:

A CHRIST-CENTERED CHURCH A HOLY SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH
A PRAYING CHURCH A FASTING CHURCH
A GROWING CHURCH A TITHING CHURCH
A TEACHING, BIBLICALLY LITERATE CHURCH
A LOVING, SHARING, CARING CHURCH
A WORSHIPPING, CELEBRATING CHURCH
A PROGRESSIVE AND AFRICAN CENTERED CHURCH
A POLITICALLY AWARE AND SOCIALLY ACTIVE CHURCH

As individual members working with, praying for, and taking ownership of this Vision, the needs of the sick, confined, unchurched, imprisoned, homeless, helpless, hungry, and hurting will be met.

A Vision is a Divine Plan based on the Scripture "without a vision the people perish." If we fail to plan, we plan to fail.

Thank you for a another good year. Let us not grow weary in well doing but look toward the Christ through whose help we realize the Vision.

I look forward to our life in The Church On The Hill where prayer is changing people and people are changing things.

APPENDIX H - THE NAOMI/RUTH RESOLUTION

"Windows of souls sparkle when the SON shines through." Persons accepting election and appointment are to enter into a mutual covenant as follows:

OFFICERS AND LEADERS IN GOOD STANDING DEFINED:

Be is resolved that all members wishing to serve as an officer or leader, elected or appointed, shall make a mutual covenant with the Lord and members of this congregation to:

- Be a believing Christian, having confessed Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and seeking to walk daily in obedience to God's Word.
- Make a commitment and a covenant to tithe*.
- Attend weekly Bible Study or Sunday School
- Serve faithfully by attending Worship, required meetings and fulfilling all duties pertaining to the thereto.

***Persons who tithe shall be defined as one who has completed an annual pledge card, indicating their practice of tithing, and one who has made a covenant with the Lord to consistently and faithfully give back to God a minimum of ten percent (10%) of their gross income (Malachi 3:8-10).**

In accordance with this resolution, if any officer or leader, elected or appointed, violates the mutual covenant into which they have entered, they vacate their own office of service. The Pastor and Moderator may nominate proposed names to fill the said vacancy.

Mayflower Congregational (United Church Of Christ)...
...The Church on the Hill where prayer is changing people and people are changing things.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT
FOR CHURCH OFFICIALS, LEADERS, AND SERVICE POSITIONS

I,_____accept my nomination to serve as _____. I am committed to the Constitution and ByLaws of the church and will faithfully fulfil all the duties and responsibilities of the office to which I am elected.

I understand that I am expected to:

- make an "Annual Written Financial Pledge" consistent with moving toward a tithe (10%).
- attend at least 3/4's of the worship experiences and group's meetings.
- make spiritual, positive, and consistent contributions to the work of the group on behalf of the church.

Further, I understand that if I cannot meet these expectations, the Moderator in conference with the Pastor may appoint an alternate to my position.

Signed_____

Date_____

.....

I_____can no longer serve on the_____Board/Committee due to

_____

Signed_____ Date_____

APPENDIX I - The Mandinka Warriors
By Attorney Frank Gillespie

The creation of the male mentoring program at Mayflower United Church of Christ stems from a need recognized by the minister, the Reverend Pamela June Anderson, to reach out to the youth in and around the church to provide positive male guidance. The underlying rationale for the creation of this organization is to promote the healthy development of African-American males. Our goal is to develop individuals who have strength of character, firmness of conviction, and a well grounded sense of principles to solidify the decision-making process of the young men as they develop into responsible adult males.

The importance of developing a strong African-American male must become paramount before the label "endangered species" becomes a **rally cry** for the African-American race in its belated effort to save one of its most important components. To achieve that goal it is required that **all dependable male members** step forward and assume their natural responsibility and assist in the [religious], physical, emotional, educational, and communal development of our African-American male population.

The vision that is our guiding force is similar to that used in the government funded MIDNIGHT BASKETBALL PROGRAM. Our program is designed to provide a structured learning environment for young men where they can develop structured

study habits and have direct access to responsible adult males who can provide assistance with homework. At the conclusion of the homework period, there will be a structured recreational program where basketball will be taught with the emphasis placed on the fundamentals of the game, cooperation and teamwork.

Our approach will be simple and straightforward. We require that all the young men **must arrive** for his study session **on time**. He must be prepared to begin his homework session by arriving with his books (or class handouts) and an attitude conducive to a productive learning environment. It is envisioned that the study sessions will last approximately one and a half hours. At the conclusion of the study session, the mentors will spend time with the young men, either individually or as a group, to provide guidance and nurturing.

It will also be during this time that the young men will prepare to go to the gymnasium for basketball practice. Transportation to the gymnasium will be provided by either Church members and mentors. Upon arrival at the gymnasium, practice will begin in a prompt, organized, structured manner. Our program is geared for young men who are at least nine (9) years of age. As such, one of the most important components is to teach the older youth to take responsibility for the younger members. It is hoped that this approach will develop a sense of responsibility for the

youth's community and its members.

APPENDIX J - Cover Letter and The Community Transformation and Rebirth Survey tabulation

Dearest Neighbor:

Please take TWO MINUTES to read this letter; EIGHT MINUTES to complete the SURVEY; ONE MINUTE to place the completed survey in the self-addressed, stamped confidential envelopes; and ONE MINUTE to mail. 12 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME IS ALL I ASK.

On January 1, 1994, I became the first, full time, African American female pastor in the United Church of Christ in the State of Michigan. I am also a Doctoral student at the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

As Senior Pastor of the Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ at 7301 Curtis at Monica, Detroit, Michigan 48221, God has blessed the church to make some tremendous improvements in our giving practices, program and ministry development, worship attendance, and property improvements.

However, I would like to hear from communities around us. From the communities point of view, your assistance will help me (1) assess the potential spiritual and numerical growth of our church; (2) address your awareness and/or impressions about Mayflower Congregational Church; (3) measure your interest in church attendance and/or membership in general; and (4) focus on attempting to meet community needs.

Please complete the short survey and mail it in time to reach my attention no later than 1 November 1995.

While I am fully aware of Mayflower's history I am not attempting to change Mayflower's history. My desire is to change the church's future by addressing the needs of this present age. Just to name a few, I believe our church needs (1) an instrumentalist that can play a variety of spiritually based music; (2) a youth minister - someone interested in and committed to helping with Safe Space Activities at the church; for example, rites of passage, traditional and alternative family lifestyle development, study skills formation, anonymous or private support groups for single parents, persons with AIDS, and abused persons.

Please help me help the community and the church. I want us to be a part of you and we need you to be a part of us. Thank you for assisting me...

...in Christ,

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION AND REBIRTH COMMUNITY SURVEY
(October 1995)

How long have you lived in this neighborhood

1 - 5 years__8__ 6-10 years__3__ 11-15 years__0__
16-25 years__3__ 26-30 years_7___ 30 years or longer__7___

What is your age range? 7 - 15 years old_____

16-21 years old__0___ 22-30 years old ___3___
31-40 years old__7___ 41 - 49 years old__3___
50-59 years old__5___ Over 60 years old_13___

Have you ever attended the Mayflower Congregational Church?

If Yes, how often__14____

If No, why not?__Of 15 no's, 1 = agnostic; 1 = don't know; 1 = never invited; 1 = not interested; and 6 = have church home.

What do you think church ought to be about?_____

- The church should be a reflection of the community.
- Reaching out to the unsaved - spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- First, to save souls. Second, to service the community by having out reach ministries.
- Teachings of Christ and how we as Christians are supposed to treat each other.
- Helping the community by offering spiritual/non-spiritual guidance.
- Transformation of souls/society.
- God, Christ, salvation
- Community outreach ministry - youth, young adults.
- Spiritual growth, educational and community oriented.
- Christian guidance for all ages. No scorn for different beliefs.
- Teaching responsibility to God, self, and community.

- People.
- Teaching the principles of love, faith, pride, personal growth through religion.
- Teaching Word of God; community service; practice what you pray; loving one another unconditionally as God does and it is shown in the Pastor and Congregation.
- Completing the mission of Christ.
- Edification and building up the Body of Christ; equipping us to be a light to a 'dark' world.
- Saving souls.
- Saving souls and salvation.
- Spiritual uplifting, praise and prayer to God, building self-esteem, self-worth, self-determination, and spiritual beliefs.
- Witnessing to others, ministering to those who need help; encouraging, supporting, nurturing each other in love.
- Saving souls; demonstrating God's love.
- Spread the Gospel; leading persons to the "Good News," saving souls; counseling; burying the dead; and being our spiritual leader.
- Providing a social and economic base for the community as well as a spiritual base.
- Promoting family life in the community; open, and welcome to all people in the community (Detroit).
- Meeting spiritual needs and physical needs so that man's life can be abundant now and in heaven.
- Six did not respond to this question.

If you could start your own church or participate in your church, what programs or ministries would you offer?

- Children outreach with needed services; single and married outreach; support of Detroit with open door attitude.

- The development of a credit union and the development of an interdependent relationship with other churches in the area in order to involve the total area in improvement.

- Outreach program for alcoholics, drug abusers, homeless, and youth ministry.

- Community outreach; religious education; marriage and counseling of youth; proposals to train and educate youth; senior programs; after school programs, etc.

- Have services outside the walls of the church to reach those who will not attend a church building.

- Youth, homeless, AIDS Awareness, Senior Citizens, Bible Study, Counseling for young mothers, spousal abuse, social action.

- Church newspaper, separate children's church services, support group meetings, recreation for children, home services for the shut-in.

- Buying homes in community, loans, helping the needy, sex education, drug prevention.

- Outreach ministry. Meet the needs of the unsaved.

- This would depend on the needs of the membership.

- Self esteem classes/workshops; submission in marriage and everyday life according to Word of God; power of prayer workshops; power of thought workshops; substance abuse counseling; parenting classes; teenage sexuality.

- Youth church - age 4 and older.

- Youth, singles, women in the real world, family support of single moms and dads, a real community building activist approach.

- I am more of a joiner than a leader.

- Programs to enable Blacks to be self sufficient and eliminate drugs.

- Mentorships - rites of passage - economic development.

- Youth ministry, music ministry, single parent ministry.

- Assistance to community, Bible study, youth programs.

- Study of religions; women's spirituality; young people and children; character building; music-indigenous.

- Programs for the homeless children (year round-services). Educational.

- Mentors for children between the ages of 10 to 21.

- Tutorial programs, food and shelter programs, political forums, senior citizens food and friendship.

- Bible study - youth - senior programs. Community church with good preaching, counseling programs, and maybe job opportunities (help to find employment).

- Childcare (Bible school).

- Six did not respond to this question.

What do you think Congregational Means? (check all that apply)

11	Denomination	5	Tradition
3	A form of government	3	None of the above
2	All of the above	10	Other

[Those who responded <u>other</u> added the following: A coming together. Meeting of a body of people for a purpose. Together. A gathering of people. Don't know. A total of three persons made no response.]

To some, Mayflower means:

"I grew up here"

"I buried my spouse here"

"I married my children here"

"The demise of the Native Americans"

"Slavery, Slave Holders, and Colonialism"

"Puritans and Pilgrims"

"Furniture Movers"

What does Mayflower mean to you, if anything?

- Pain and racism

- Puritans and pilgrims and a boat
- Just a name given to a church
- Related back to the days of old
- The name means white. The building/edifice called by that name means love, spirituality, friendship, caring, a house of the Lord where all of the above takes place.
- Nothing in particular.
- Escape from religious persecution. Puritans, indentured.
- A ship Christopher Columbus sailed on or furniture movers.
- Nothing spiritual.
- A community of believers serving Christ.
- No significant meaning.
- It's just a response.
- I don't know.
- It's just a word.
- The beginning of life and the start of a new season.
- Pilgrims and puritans.
- Nothing in particular.
- Only a name.
- A name I do not identify with.
- Not applicable.
- ?
- Slavery, slave holders, and colonialism
- A church going through changes.
- A white church.

If you could, what would you name a church in your community:

Agape (Love) Congregational 2

Burning Spear Congregational 0

Faith (Imani) Congregational 7

Judson King Congregational 0

L'Amistad (We be free) Congregational 2

Peace (Amani) Congregational 3

Peoples Congregational 4

Sojourner Truth Congregational 3

W.E.B. Du Bois Congregational 4

Other: In God We Trust (1); Body of Born Again Believers in Detroit (1); The Church of God in Detroit (1); Mayflower (1); The Church of Detroit (1).

Has anyone ever invited you to Mayflower?

15 No. 15 Yes.

When? Women's Seminar.
Once a month.
1995.
Pastor's Installation Service.
1994.
As neighbors five years ago.
Last Year.
In 1989.
Omega Memorial Service.
60's - 80's.

Have you attended an event at Mayflower? 14 Yes. 14 No.

If 'yes,' what was the event(s)

- Judge Wahls was presented in concert.
- Wedding.
- Wedding and play.
- Weekly services, Bible study, most activities.
- A morning service.
- Omega Memorial Service and Feeding Homeless ministry at

Thanksgiving.

- My daughter's wedding.
- A Christening.
- Closing ceremony for the Vacation Bible School Program.
- Morning worship service.
- Regular services.
- Marriage.
- Women's Seminar earlier this year.

If 'no', what would attract you to Mayflower?

- The Pastor.
- An invitation to attend a special program.
- Concerts of the "Culturally Concerned." Jazz (Piano Jazz Concerts), Homecoming, Sunday Services.
- An event - funeral/wedding.
- Preaching of the Gospel of Christ allowing the power of God to work in our lives which in turn will help us to make a difference in our community.
- I may visit from time to time. What time is service?
- Don't know.
- Activity, prayer services, outreach to the community.
- Advertisement.
- A good speaker, Bible studies, plays, fashion shows.
- Women's program other than Women's Day.
- I'm not sure; this survey has made me curious. I think I'll visit.
- Someone dedicated to improving the community and their senior's population. Outreach programs.
- Maunday Thursday.

Are you __5__ male or __25__ female?

Are you a member of any church? __23__ Yes __7__ No

If 'no', would you consider participating in the life of Mayflower? __6__ yes.

At the bottom of the survey I wrote:

"My mission is the lead the church and the community to be proud of 'who' we are and grounded in 'Whose' we are. I am a Christ/African Centered individual interested in being used by God to preach, to pray, and to purpose a high regard for justice, peace, and respect for community, African American families, and spiritual values. Come and help make personal life, community life, and church life attractive to those looking for a place that listens, loves, lives and longs for spiritual healing, hope, and happiness. You are welcomed to be a part of this church called, affectionately, The Church on the Hill...where prayer is changing people and people are changing things.

Thank You filling out and mailing this SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION AND REBIRTH SURVEY by 1 November 1995.

APPENDIX K - Candidacy Review

"MY CHURCH MY SELF" - The Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ is a congregation in the process of addressing mission and ministry as a reflection of its constituency and Creator.

Summary of Model

The model is one of Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth in response to concurrent and projected changes in demographics within the Context in Ministry.

The Mayflower Congregational Church was founded by European Americans in 1930. In the early 60's, the demographics within the surrounding community transformed from predominantly European to African American residence. As the community transformed the church also changed. The church is now 99% African American with bloodlines influenced by Indian, Irish, and German lineage.

The objective of the Model is to develop Christ/African centeredness and, thereby, identity with 'Whose' and 'who' we are.

The requirements of the Model are: (1) for minister(s) and member(s) to understand, acknowledge, and work out the application, work through the implication, and work on the implementation of the reality as stated in the Summary of Model in daily life structures; (2) discuss, analyze, and apply the Model as it serves the task of strengthening and affirming our Christ/African consciousness in work, worship, spiritual development, community involvement, emotional commitment, and political activity.

Summary of methodology for designing, implementing, and evaluating model:

- Methodology for discussion and analysis will lead to implementation of the project.
- Through a series of Christ/African centered sermons, services, prayer focus, bulletin/newsletter input, and small group discussions, transformation and rebirth becomes the integral part of the process.
- There will be a Pre-survey and a Post Spiritual Transformation and Rebirth Survey to measure the progress of the process.

The Model is the guideline for focusing the methodology, implementation, and evaluation. Immediately following a 'Project' event, Contextual Associates and on site Advisors will participate in a debriefing period to evaluate the Model.

Consultants:

Marjorie Harris, Ph.D.
President - Lewis College of Business
Detroit, Michigan
Implications for Changing Name of College

G. Wesley Raney, M.Div.
Pastor - Macedonia United Church of Christ
Raleigh, N. C.
Implications for changing name of church

Elon Eloni Wilks, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent
Detroit Public Schools
Detroit, Michigan
Implications for changing personal name

APPENDIX L - Project Consultant Team (In alphabetical Order)

Molefi Kete Asante, Ph.D. (Mentor)
Department of African American Studies
Temple University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Robert O. Bland, Ph.D. (Onsite)
Academic Dean
Lewis College of Business
Detroit, Michigan

Marjorie Harris, Ph.D. (Onsite)
President
Lewis College of Business
Detroit, Michigan

Harriet Miller, Ph.D. (Outside Examiner)
Faculty Emeritus
United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio

Mary Olson, D.Min. (Consultant)
Dean, Doctoral Studies
United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio

Kenneth Pohly, Ph.D. (Faculty)
Faculty - United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio

G. Wesley Raney, M.Div. (Consultant)
Pastor - Macedonia United Church of Christ
Raleigh, N. C.

Cornel West, Ph.D. (Mentor)
Afro-American Studies Program
Princeton University
Princeton, N. J.

Elon Eloni Wilks, Ed.D. (Onsite)
Associate Superintendent
Detroit Public Schools
Detroit, Michigan

The Reverend Bernadette Glover Williams (Peer)
Associate Pastor - Second Baptist Church
Perth Amboy, N.J.

Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr. D.Min (Mentor)
Pastor - Trinity United Church of Christ
Chicago, Illinois

APPENDIX M - Annotated Bibliography

Theological Resources

ben-Jochannon, Yosef. African Origins of the Major Western Religions. New York: Alkeku-Lan Books, 1973.

The author presents the role of religion in the development of a people by comparing the Jesus narrative with the Egyptian Horus.

DeVille, Jard. Pastor's Handbook on Interpersonal Relationships: Keys to successful Leadership. Grand Rapids, Mi: Baker Book House, 1986.

The author presents several models for building interpersonal relationship in preparation for introducing change in the church. The author also includes in his writings models for understanding human behavior in relation to the dynamics at work during change.

McCray, Walter Arthur. The Black Presence in the Bible. Chicago: Black Light Fellowship, 1990.

The author shares his discovery of the Black and African identity in Biblical persons and nations.

McCray, Walter Arthur. The Black Presence in the Bible and the Table of Nations. Chicago: Black Light Fellowship, 1990.

The author emphasizes the Hamitic Genealogical line from a Black perspective.

The Original African Heritage Study Bible. Edited by Cain Hope Felder. Nashville, TN: James C. Winston, 1993.

Historical Resources

Adams, John Quincy. Argument of John Quincy Adams. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1841.

The author details the arguments before the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of the United States, appellants, versus Cinque and other Africans captured in the Schooner Amistad. These arguments were delivered on 24 February and 1 March 1841.

Baker, William A. The Mayflower and Other Colonial Vessels. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1983.

The author provides portraits of the Mayflower and

other Colonial Vessels at sea during the 17th century.

Barber, John Warner. A History of the Amistad Captives. New York: Arno Press, 1969.

This is a reprint of the 1840 edition describing the anti-slavery crusade in America.

Cable, Mary. Black Odyssey. New York: Viking Press, 1971.

The author presents the case of the slave ship Amistad and the social climate that supported slavery and insurrections in the United States.

Hoyt, Edwin Palmer. The Amistad Affair. London, New York: Aberlard-Schuman, 1970.

This book addresses slavery in the United States at the time of the Amistad incident.

Kromer, Helen. The Amistad Revolt 1839. New York: F. Watts, 1973.

This book recounts the causes, events, and aftermath of the mutiny of African slaves aboard the Spanish Schooner Amistad enroute to the Americas in 1839.

Martin, B. Edmon. All We Want Is To Make Us Free. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986.

This book is about the La Amistad, a Slave Ship, and the reform abolitionist Cinque.

Wood, Herbert George. Venturers for the Kingdom: A study in the History of the Pilgrim Fathers. London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1920.

The author describes the passengers in the "Mayflower."

Sociological Resources

Asante, Molefi Kete. The Book of African Names. Trenton,N.J.: African World Press, Inc., 1991.

The author provides a naming book based upon an Afrocentric orientation to the world, principles and significance of naming, and a Pan-African approach to naming.

Stuckey, Sterling. Slave Culture. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

The author presents the positions of W.E.B. Du bois, Henry Highland Garnet, Frederick Douglass, et.al., on the subject of the names' controversy (African, African American, Negro, and Colored).

Stewart, Julia. African Names. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1993.

Recognizing names that stripped African slaves of their psyche, this work links the importance of naming and, therefore, restoring the connected between African ancestors and their descendants.

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Rooks, Charles Shelby. Revolution in Zion. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1990.

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Wright, Jeremiah A. Jr. African Who Shaped Our Faith. Chicago: Urban Ministries, Inc., 1995.

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